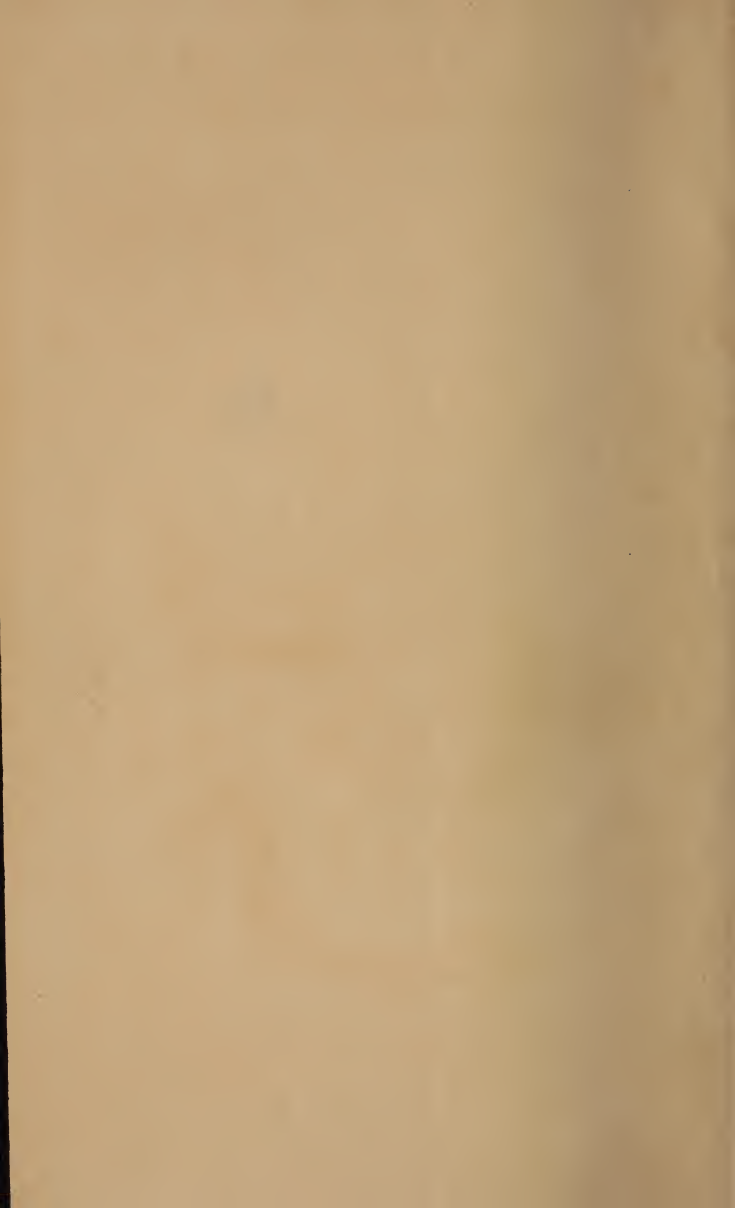




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Path of Life.

The
PATH OF LIFE,

BY

Daniel Wise



BOSTON.

C. H. PEIRCE.

THE
PATH OF LIFE:

OR

SKETCHES

OF

1871

THE WAY TO GLORY AND IMMORTALITY.

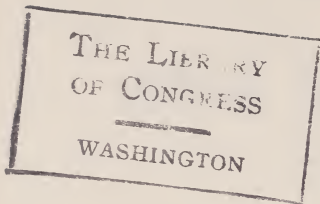
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A Help for Young Christians.

BY REV. DANIEL WISE.

Author of "Lovest thou Me," "Christian Love," &c.

BOSTON:
CHARLES H. PEIRCE.
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INSCRIPTION.

TO ALL BELIEVERS IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ; AND
ESPECIALLY TO ALL YOUNG CONVERTS, BABES IN CHRIST,
AND YOUNG CHRISTIANS, THIS WORK IS MOST AFFECTION-
ATELY INSCRIBED, BY THEIR UNWORTHY BROTHER IN
CHRIST,

DANIEL WISE.

P R E F A C E .



THE following pages are designed for the especial benefit of young pilgrims in the way of life. In their first journeyings they meet with many difficulties. Now, a fog obscures the path ; here, a net is spread ; there, a pit is dug ; elsewhere seductive syrens sing the bewitching songs of error ; and in other places tempting arbors invite them to slumber in shady bowers. Dangers lie all along the path. To explain these dangers, to warn the young pilgrim, to excite his fears, to animate his hopes, are the aims of this book. These things, we know, have been often done by others. Pike, Abbott, Merritt, Hodge, and others, well known to fame, have written most ably for the young. But there is a demand for variety, and it is hoped that this volume may perform some little service for Christ, not accomplished by these admired authors. There are several experimental difficulties common to young Christians removed out of the way in this work, which it is believed have not been noticed by previous writers for young disciples.

We have aimed to write so as to profit the reader. Yet, we have not shunned the pleasing illustration, thereby to allure to the more solemn truth. We have endeavored in this respect to occupy a middle ground between the profuse illustrativeness of Abbott and the rigid simplicity of Pike and Merritt. Profound theological reasoning need not be sought in this little volume, for we have not attempted to write a body of divinity; yet, there is enough of saving truth explained, to make simple the **PATH OF LIFE** to every sincere inquirer. We have offered many prayers over these pages, and now send them forth to the world, not without hope that the Head of the Church will use them to help His latest born disciples in their doubtful way to His eternal kingdom.

D. W.

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CHAPTER I.

RELIGION A SOLEMN SUBJECT.



ILL the reader permit himself to be transported to some European city ?

A royal cavalcade is passing there, with all its wonted pomp and circumstance. Beautiful banners and silken pennons are floating in the air ; plumes are nodding and waving to and fro upon many a martial head ; drums are rolling and trumpets flourishing ; while the wide welkin rings with the shouts of a pleased and applauding multitude.

Amidst the ten thousand people, who gaze upon this showy pageant, stands a youth unknown as yet,

to the great world — a simple-minded, unambitious lad, whose highest hope is to succeed well in the craft by which he earns his bread. As the royal personage passes this youth, he singles him out from among his companions, and an officer is sent to conduct him to the kingly carriage. There he sits, side by side with royalty. He is conducted to the palace. Place and title are given him. He becomes, at once, the friend and protege of the king.

It will not be at all difficult for the reader to suppose, that, henceforth, this youth will *think more highly of himself* than he did before. Others, too, will think him greater, and pay him a respect such as they never paid him while he was a simple mechanic.

Why would this change take place in the feelings of the youth and his friends? *Really*, he is no greater than when he stood gazing at the gay pageant in the street. He is of no more worth, physically, intellectually or morally. Why, then, is he greater in his own estimation? — In the opinion of society?

The reason is plain. His relations to the social

body are changed. Before his exaltation, he was merely an artizan : one of the brotherhood of labor ; now he is connected with the chief magistrate, the sovereign of the realm. It is from that connection, he derives his new-born greatness.

Such a relation to some human potentate, would swell the heart of almost any man—it would thrill the soul of the reader. Were it practicable ; he would seek it with indescribable earnestness. Had he attained it, he would maintain it by the most diligent and unsparing exertions.

But this relation to earthly majesty is impossible to the young reader. He may not derive honor and dignity from intimate connections with royalty. His largest *rational* hope is a little wealth ; a small share of political distinction, and a few civic honors from his townsmen. This is the utmost boundary—the ultima Thule—of the earthly prospects of all, who will read these pages.

May I not hope, then, to secure both the attention and heart of the reader, when I inform him that a connection with *one* royal potentate is possible

to the humblest, the most unknown 'little one' in this teeming world? With the KING OF KINGS — the EVERLASTING JEHOVAH — the most intimate relations are possible to the meanest man who walks the earth! Strangely wonderful; but infinitely true is the fact, that the vilest sinner of human kind may derive dignity, honor, and glory, from the Holy Father of all things. Nay, more, he may become his *child*: may enjoy the riches, the affection, the care, the communion, the grandeur which belongs to a filial relation!

God of Glory, is this possible? May I? May the reader be really and truly related to thee as thy child? Stupendous thought! Unheard-of condescension! Most wonderful love! Sinners, *worms*, *creatures*, may be allied to the Lord God Omnipotent! Yea, many have been so united to him; for, to as many as received the Lord Jesus by faith "TO THEM GAVE HE POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD EVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE ON HIS NAME."

With this glorious connection open to all who may choose to form it, what shall we say of those who

despise it? Of those, who have stoutly refused to accept it, or having accepted it, have cast its honors and dignities away as unworthy trifles? O, is it not a sad and melancholy infatuation to turn with only *unspoken* contempt from the most enduring and exalting honors in the universe? For the sake of forbidden pleasures, whose raptures die away in a moment, and leave an undying worm behind, they neglect and despise the friendship of God! Spurning the substance; they choose the shadow! Loathing the Eternal; they love the momentary and perishing! Despising the lovely and beautiful; they court the hideous and horrible. In a word, they scorn the CREATOR and adore the CREATURE. Most hopeless and ruinous contempt! Persisted in a little while — and O, how brief that time will be — the long insulted Jehovah will tear them from their chosen objects of delight, and cast them down to depths of unfathomed woe.

Happy then is that youth, who has sought the honor of being a Christian. In rising from the condition of a guilty sinner, he has already soared far above the

envied lot of nobles and monarchs. A Christian is greater than a king. He is more honorable, more elevated, more happy. His honors are real ; those of princes are imaginary ; his elevation is eternal, that of thrones temporary — his happiness is genuine and satisfactory, while that of kings is fancied and unsatisfactory. Considered in any and every aspect :

“ A CHRISTIAN IS THE HIGHEST STYLE OF MAN.”

“ BELOVED NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD.” Can any human dignity equal this? Nay! for it surpasses immeasurably the proudest dignities of earth. To be “ *Heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ,*” is to have unsearchable riches, which laugh to scorn the tiny coffers of kings, and shame the wealth of the whole material universe. To have “ *fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ,*” is to enjoy a degree and quality of bliss undreamed of in the wildest reveries of the most sanguine sinner — it is “ *joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” To believe, *undoubtedly*, that in our “ *Father’s house are many mansions ;*” that when

“ Christ shall appear we shall be like him even as he is,” that we shall stand as *“ kings and priests unto God ”* before the throne, and sing *“ the song of Moses and the Lamb for ever ”*—that we shall dwell *“ where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest ; ”* and that once in that undescribed and undescribable world of glory, we *“ shall go no more out for ever ; ”* is to have an enjoyment, so ravishing, and a hope so resplendently glorious that the combined anticipations of every unrenewed mind sink into utter nothingness, when compared with the prospects of one such humble follower of Christ. And more than this, to be the temples of the indwelling God *now*—to have these *“ vile bodies ”* honored as the abodes of the Holy Spirit and our once defiled natures washed, and transformed into the image of Jesus Christ ! To have the HOLY ONE look with pleasure upon his image reflected upon our souls, this—this is dignity indeed—it is elevation and honor beyond the conception of unrenewed sinners !

Yet these are the dignities, honors, prospects and

joys of the Christian ! Invested with this high character, Lazarus, ragged, beggared, spotted with disease, is really greater and happier than imperial Cæsar. Beneath that forbidding exterior, he conceals a princely dignity, which will shine as the sun in THE DAY that will witness the everlasting downfall of the proudest sinners.

What, then, is more important than to know ourselves Christians ? Food, clothing, station, wealth, friendships, have their value. But Christianity is worth far more than all these put together. Could it be purchased, it would be cheaply bought, at the sacrifice of every thing in your possession, not excepting life itself. For without it, man is in momentary peril of perishing everlastingly.

Can you imagine a man sleeping on the brink of some lofty height ? A gulf of many fathoms deep yawns below. In his slumber, he starts fitfully, as if disturbed by horrific dreams ; every motion brings him nearer to the crumbling edge. Another start, a slight crumbling of the earth, and he is gone — dashed to pieces on the craggy rocks beneath !

Does your heart sicken at the conception of that sleeper's danger? It should sicken more at the idea of not being a Christian. The peril is greater. The ruin more terrible. For while an unchristian man is gliding with irresistible rapidity towards the mysterious future, "HELL IS MOVING FROM BENEATH TO MEET HIM AT HIS COMING!"

See, then, young immortal, the unmeasured importance of being a Christian. Neglect it; you can never know a moment of real happiness, here or hereafter. Seek it; and you secure true enjoyment in both worlds. Neglect it, and how will you meet your Creator? Meet him you must, for the river can as soon roll its floods backward as you can stop your unerring destination to the bar of God. How can your spirit stand unclothed at his judgment seat without the friendship of Jesus Christ? How terrible the thought of standing alone amid the infinities of the universe, to be confronted by the Being you have rejected! There, from amidst clouds and darkness, His eyes, brighter than the lightning's flash,

shall dart consuming flame through your shivering spirit ! His word shall send you, thrilling, with the anguish of remorse, to the abodes of eternal sadness ! But if you are a Christian, death will be no terror and the future will be blessed.

CHAPTER II.

REPENTANCE.



WILL you not therefore seriously study this great question ; “ Am I a Christian ? ”

Among those who throng the altars of the church are two parties, who rush into two opposite and equally dangerous extremes. The one party contend that it is very hard, if not impossible, to certainly know yourself a Christian ; the other as zealously affirm it to be one of the easiest things imaginable.

To a young Christian, these opposite opinions are as dangerous, as the much dreaded Scylla and Charybdis were to the ancient and timid navigator in

the waters of Sicily. If he is led by the first of these parties, he may perish in a whirlpool of doubt and unbelief ; if by the second he may be dashed to pieces on the rocks of hypocrisy and carnal security. The truth lies between them. A man may be as certainly conscious that he is a Christian as he is of his own existence ; for says the Apostle, "*we know we have passed from death unto life ;*" while to *retain* that consciousness, is a task requiring great self-denial and severe heart-discipline.

Supposing that my young reader desires to navigate these dangerous waters in safety, to avoid all extremes, and to settle on bible principles the great question of his personal Christianity, I propose to offer him the great scriptural marks by which alone it must be decided.

The first lesson enounced by the great Teacher to a fallen world was that of Repentance. "*Repent ye*" was the voice uttered by the forerunner of Christ : by Christ himself : and by his apostles. If then you are a Christian, *You have repented of sin.*

Repentance is so simple a thing, a matter so easily

comprehended, one would think it impossible to make a mistake, or to suppose ourselves penitent when we are not. Yet such a mistake is possible. Men may think they have repented of sin, when they have never known true penitential feeling. Paul recognizes this possibility in his letter to the Corinthians. He says, “ *Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of*: but the *sorrow of the world worketh death.*”

Here are unquestionably two species of sorrow, both of which the Corinthians might have considered religious: the one he calls “Godly sorrow;” the other “sorrow of the world.” And so diverse are they in their character, that while the former needed not to be regretted or repented of, because it led to reformation and eternal life; the latter only led to eternal death.

Does this sentiment cast a shadow on your young heart? Does it discourage you and raise the question; “Perhaps I too am deceived?” If so, refrain from your misgivings; remember that while deception is possible it is *not necessary*.

I will now present you with illustrations of true and false repentance, by which you will readily perceive the wide difference that exists between them, and also understand precisely the nature of that penitence, which is the primary lesson in the school of Jesus Christ.

There was once a lad of my acquaintance, who had grown discontented. The just and wholesome restraints of his father's house were irksome to him. His proud heart magnified the wise discipline of home into tyranny. His temper grew sour. He became the evil genius of his paternal home.

Miserable himself, he spread an evil influence around him. The faces of his parents wore a saddened aspect. They expostulated with the wayward boy. He considered these judicious pleadings harsh; in a moment of excitement he resolved to quit his home forever.

Prompted by ungovernable passions, he started stealthily away by night. Borne by swift conveyances, he soon reached a distant city. Madly joyous were his first wild outbreaks of feeling, when he felt

himself *free*. No will above his own to control him. O! he fancied himself the happiest of youth.

A few days spent in pleasure exhausted his scanty purse. He sought employment. His pride had often whispered that he had only to offer himself, to be eagerly employed by men of his craft. Now, he put his hope to the test, and called at various stores with the question — “Do you wish to hire any one in your business?”

He met only a cold, unfeeling gaze, and an equally cold “We do not.”

On he went from store to store, from street to street, and still the chilling, “We do not,” fell upon his ears.

Thus he spent several days. His money gone, his spare wardrobe sold for bread, and still no employment. Hunger, grim and terrible of countenance, stared him in the face. Poverty compelled him to sleep in an empty cart that stood in a back street. Poor, proud boy! how sadly his sins used him.

In this extremity he reasoned with himself: “Fool that I am to stay here and starve. Father has plenty

at home, and his fireside is warm. The old gentleman is pretty good hearted after all. I'll go back ; if I do not I shall starve. If I could stay here, I would ; but I can't. So I'll go home and tell my father I'm sorry, and so get rid of my trouble."

He returns home. With downcast eyes, he ventures into his father's presence. "Father," he says with well affected grief, "I am sorry I went from home. If you will let me come back again, I will try and do better in future."

He is forgiven and reinstated in his former place at the family homestead.

What does my reader think ? Is this a case of true penitence ; or is it not ? This lad felt sorrowful ; he confessed his fault ; he promised amendment. These are the three elements of repentance ; yet still, I press the question, was he a penitent ?

Before resolving this point ; I wish to introduce another illustration.

Suppose, then, a mother and her daughter residing in some pleasant country village. It is a school holiday.

“ Mother, may I go to play with the girls in the pasture, this afternoon ? ” inquires the child.

“ You may, Helen, on one condition.”

“ What is that, mother ? ”

“ That you will not go into Mr. Lester’s meadow after strawberries.”

“ Why not, mother ? ”

“ Because the ivy abounds there. Mr. Lester’s men were poisoned by it last summer ; and you know your playmate, Jane Carter, is now sick from the same cause. She went there last week to gather strawberries, and her feet are sadly swollen through being poisoned by the ivy.”

“ Then I am sure, mother, I will not go into the meadow.”

“ On that condition, you may join your friends in their pastimes, this afternoon.”

Helen now sets out to join her companions, inwardly resolved to keep her promise. Various are the sports pursued by the youthful party, beneath a cluster of pleasant trees in the pasture. They organize a mimic school ; they go through the forms of house-

keeping ; they run, they race, they enjoy the exhilaration of a swing, which is fastened safely to a stout old tree. At length, they are weary, and pause for some new method of spending the time. Presently, a little girl cries out, "Let us go into Mr. Lester's meadow and gather strawberries."

"O yes, let us go ;" respond a half dozen voices at once.

Helen interposes. "O no, don't let us go there."

"Why not, Helen ? Why not, Helen ?" they inquire.

"There is poison ivy in the meadow," she replies.

"O, is that all," they exclaim all at once.

"Don't you know Jane Carter is sick through going into that meadow and getting poisoned with the ivy ?"

A pause ensues. The little party is startled. They know Jane Carter is sick. They *may* get poisoned too. Perhaps they had better not go.

Thus they *think* a few moments, when one of the girls starts up and remarks : "Yes, Jane Carter *is*

sick ; but I know where the ivy is. It is down near the brook, which runs through the meadow. Jane went there and got poisoned. We will keep away from the brook. Come, let us go, strawberries are ripe and plenty. Let us run to the meadow."

This appeal decides them, and away they run across the pasture towards the meadow. Helen is following them slowly in the rear — her mother's caution ringing in her ears.

The meadow is reached. The children are all, save Helen, half concealed in the grass, gathering strawberries. She peeps through the fence, longing to join her companions.

"Come Helen!" cries one, at the same moment holding up a large ripe strawberry by way of temptation.

"My mother told me I must not enter the meadow," she said, though so faintly, it was plain her resolutions of obedience were fast giving way.

"O!" said the other, coaxingly, "Your mother only meant you should not get near the ivy. If you

don't get poisoned, she will not mind. Come, Helen ! ”

Helen was overcome by this specious reasoning of her wily companion. So she crept through the bars, and in a few minutes forgot her mother's admonition ; the playful remarks of the party, with the excitement of searching after the sweet ripe strawberries shut out all sober thought.

At last, the descending sun summoned the wearied party to their homes. With many a merry laugh they approached the village, where one after the other disappeared within the door of many a neat white cottage. When Helen entered her pleasant home, she felt strangely. Her happiness was all gone. Her heart sad. The pleasant greeting of her fond mother made her feel worse. She could not look her in the face. Neither could she eat at the tea table. When she went up stairs to bed and knelt down, as usual, to say her evening prayer, her heart swelled and choked with emotion ; she laid herself down, unable to utter a word of prayer !

Helen was guilty, and she felt it. Her mind was

greatly troubled at a review of her disobedience. She could not sleep. Tossing about in her bed, turning from side to side, she vainly endeavored to forget the meadow, and the sin she had committed in entering it contrary to her mother's command. She bore these pangs of guilt for some time ; at last, finding no peace, she arose, dressed herself ; descending the stairs she entered the parlor, and with a bursting heart threw herself upon her mother's neck, exclaiming, " O mother, can you forgive me ? "

" What for, my child ! " inquired her astonished parent.

" For going into the meadow ! O mother, I am very wicked — can you, will you forgive me, I will never disobey you again," and the bursting sobs, the floods of tears which flowed down her cheeks, told how deeply she grieved for the wrong she had committed.

What does the reader think of Helen ? Was her penitence real ? I think he will unhesitatingly say, it was. Why ? Because she really felt sorry for *her offence*.

Let us now return to the case of the boy already described. Let us compare his penitence with that of Helen's.

And first, the lad was sorrowful. He confessed his offence and acknowledged himself sorry. But his reflections to himself shew that his sorrow was essentially different from Helen's. He sorrowed because his sin had brought him to destitution. For the sin itself he felt no regret at all. That he had violated filial obligation, and injured his parents in their rights and feelings, caused him no compunction ; the thought of it did not humble his heart. While Helen thought of nothing but the wickedness of her conduct. She might or might not suffer punishment. Of this, she thought nothing. She was hateful in her own eyes, because she had sinned against her mother.

While, then, the lad felt unhumbled and without sorrow for his offence, his confession was only hypocrisy, and his promise to reform a conscious falsehood. With his feeling, he *could* not intend to be a dutiful son. His whole repentance was one of con-

venience to himself. A work of necessity, which he must perform, or die of starvation.

But with Helen the case was entirely the reverse. Sincerely sorry for her offence, her confession was real; her promise to be obedient genuine.

With these illustrations before you, my dear reader, I think it impossible to mistake the difference between the "sorrow of the world" and "Godly sorrow." The former is caused by misfortunes, afflictions, disgust at the world, and even by the fear of hell; but is unattended by self-loathing, by grief, for sin itself; the latter may originate in the same instrumental causes, but it goes farther; it sorrows over sin; it mourns sore, because it has grieved so good a God as the Lord; and it is followed by an immediate abandonment of all evil doings.

If then, young convert, you wish to know whether you have truly repented, ask yourself this question—seek the answer in the deep recesses of your spirit. Have I ever grieved over sin? Have I loathed myself for having sinned against God? Have I, with a broken and contrite heart, confessed my sins and ac-

knowledged my transgressions to my Creator ? Has my self-loathing on account of sin, led me to avoid it as a fiery serpent ? To put away all my evil deeds and to devote myself to the practice of righteousness ? If so — if you can answer these questions in the affirmative, you may rely upon it you have felt Godly sorrow.

Shortly after my conversion, I remember being sent for to visit a sick youth. I found him desperately sick, and in severe agony of mind. His cries for mercy were distressingly painful, for he expected to die and to be sent to hell.

Upon seeing him in so much mental distress, I pointed him to the Savior of the world. I exhorted him to believe for salvation. But no ! he would not be comforted, and after a short season spent in prayer, I left him.

Again I stood at his bedside. His mental agony had become intenser than the pangs of his bodily disease. Once more, I declared the wonders of the cross to him. As I then thought and hoped, he embraced it with a saving faith. Certainly, his counte-

nance changed, and he rejoiced with an exceeding great joy. This pleasant and happy frame of mind continued. I frequently stood astonished at the surprising alteration which had taken place in his feelings.

After a time, his disease yielded to medical skill. His recovery was rapid, and he was soon convalescent. I saw him about the first time he left his house, and, to my bitter regret, perceived his relish for religious things was declining. The next time I saw him, he was as wicked as ever.

This, I have ever considered a case of worldly sorrow. That young man was more afraid of *hell* than of *sin*. When the fear of hell was removed, by his recovery, the true state of his heart became apparent. He never felt "Godly sorrow," because he never brought forth its fruits. When Paul pronounced the sorrows of the Corinthians "Godly," he could say of it, "*For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a Godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves ; yea what indignation ; yea what fear ; yea what vehe-*


ment desire ; yea what zeal ; i. e. : their sorrow was Godly because it led to the entire putting away of sin.

But, it is asked, what do you understand to have been the cause of that young man's joy ? Probably it was only a mental hallucination, caused, chiefly, by the large quantities of narcotics which were administered to him in his sickness. But whatever caused it, it was not from the Lord, or it would have been, at least, temporarily fruitful.

Godly sorrow, therefore, you perceive, “*brings forth fruits meet for repentance.*”

CHAPTER III.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF PENITENTS.

URING a certain revival, there was a person among the serious who *manifested* great mental distress. He groaned aloud ; he wept bitterly ; he even fell prostrate before the altar and poured forth bitter cries for mercy.

In the same revival there was another mourner, who did not, and could not, experience such violent grief. While he looked upon the other, and contrasted his own calm manner with the other's excited feeling, he doubted whether he was a penitent at all.

Nor is he the only disciple, who has doubted on this point. The different manifestations of penitence

have been a prolific source of perplexity to many of Christ's lambs. Perhaps it is to you, my dear reader. Shall I remove your doubt?

Did you never observe a vast difference in the temperaments of different persons. Some are very calm and moderate in all their feelings; others are ardent and fiery. Let one man be informed of some calamity, which has befallen his property or family, and he will betray scarcely an outward emotion, while another will break forth into the wildest and most passionate lamentations. When these persons, so differently constituted, are brought under the operations of grace, there will be, yea there *must* be, in the nature of things, a corresponding difference in their manifestations of these operations.

Happily for those timid disciples, who almost love to doubt, the Holy Scriptures contain ample illustrations of this difference of outward manifestation in the work of repentance. They give us the glowing account of that ardent and fiery man, the Phillipian jailer. Rashly impetuous in his natural temper, he would, under the vivid impression that his prisoners

have escaped, and he, by consequence, liable to make the forfeiture of life, have rushed upon his sword and thrown away his life in an outbreak of passionate grief. Then, suddenly awakened by the Holy Spirit, with a violence almost as great, he hurriedly calls for a light, rushes to the feet of the apostles, falls prostrate, and cries in loud and bitter tones, "*What shall I do to be saved?*"

Here was grace acting on the man of ardent passions. Earnest and excited before his awakening, he is earnest and excited in his penitence. And so, in general, will all persons of strong passions comport themselves when under conviction.

Now, compare with this ardent Phillipian jailer, the moderate, but decided publican. There he stands at the door of the temple, heart-stricken, but calm. The arrow sinks far into his heart. He feels deeply the terrible fact that he is a sinner. Yet he displays none of the heat and haste of the former. Firmness and decision he does exhibit in those downcast eyes, that hand smiting on the guilty breast, and in that spirit-felt prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

That was the earnest utterance of his soul's depths. But there was none of the *violent* emotion of the jailer. There could scarcely be as much, he was a man of different mould.

And again, there was Lydia — the mild, gentle, almost passive Lydia. Her heart was like a rose-bud, closed at first, but slowly expanding, under the soft influence of the gentle night-dews and the warm sunbeams, into a full-blown rose. So, when grace fell upon her naturally sweet spirit, it yielded itself up freely to the blessed influence, and therefore she is described as "*Lydia whose heart the Lord opened.*"

Why are these cases of dissimilar experience given in Holy Writ? What is your opinion, serious one? Are they not given to teach *you* that, if in your penitence you *acted yourself*; i. e.: if your repentance was in keeping with your mental character, you should be satisfied, and not uselessly grieve because you repented like Lydia, or like the publican, rather than like the jailer.

There is another source of anxious feeling in some Christians. They cannot resolve the question of the

proper *duration* of repentance. Some penitents retain that character a week, others a month ; some many months and even years. While with some, a sudden awakening is followed by an almost instantaneous faith. "How long, then," the penitent will inquire, "must I continue to repent before I believe in Christ?" And the tempted believer will ask, "Did I retain a penitential character a sufficient time to make it acceptable to God?"

This point is easily settled by considering the *end* for which repentance is required of sinners. If it is to wash out sin, or to require merit by sighs and tears, then it ought to continue a long time. But this is not the fact. Repentance has no merit whatever. Tears are useless in the work of washing away sins. Why then is it required at all? What is accomplished by it? Why just what is accomplished by pain and weakness in the body. They induce the sufferer to send for a physician, to submit himself wholly to medical skill. So with penitence. It is sorrowful consciousness of guilt ; inward regret for past sins ; when that sense of guilt, and that inward sorrow have made a person

willing to forsake the sin and to abandon himself to the love of the Divine Savior, they have done their work, whether they were wrought in the heart a year or a moment since. He, whose repentance is sufficient to produce the giving up of the *heart* to Jesus Christ, *may*, and *ought* to believe at once.

It is not merely the privilege, but the solemn duty of the penitent to believe, when he is willing to give up all his sins. All his lingering fears, his timid reasonings, his unscriptural doubts, are so many sins. It should be his *first* business, when willing to give the heart to God, to embrace Christ. Immediate faith is the demand of Holy Writ. How illustrative is the experience of the primitive church, of the teachings of Scripture on this point. The day of Pentecost saw its thousands of believers, who in the morning were dead in trespasses and sin. Awakening, instruction, penitence and faith, were all accomplished in a few hours. So with the Ethiopian Eunuch, with Cornelius, with the jailer. All these sustained the character of penitents but a very short

time. Long enough to abandon sin and take Christ for their Savior.

So, dear reader, should you. If still a mourner in Zion, be sure that you are willing to give up sin ; and then give self and sin immediately to Christ. Delay not an instant. No, not even to shed a few more tears. *Believe at once !* If, however, you are a believer, and have queries concerning your past penitence, let them be resolved into this : “ Did I repent long enough to cast away my sins and come to Christ ? ” If so, rejoice. Its duration, whether a moment or a year, was long enough.

The fact of your repentance, however genuine, does not prove that you are a Christian. It only proves that you *began* right ; that you entered in at the strait gate. Your claim to the high character of a believer in Christ, depends on the existence of a living faith. Repentance is no proof of saving faith. It is necessary to it. It *must* go before it. But it is a forerunner, not a successor. To be plain, repentance precedes, not follows, regeneration. “ Let a man have ever so much repentance, or

ever so many of the fruits meet for repentance, yet all this does not at all avail ; he is not justified till he believes." *

Many well-meaning persons have erred on this point, and have considered their penitence to be an evidence of regeneration. The reason of this mistake is, that a state of repentance supposes a change in the disposition and feelings of a sinner. And this change they call regeneration.

Their mistake lies in confounding *the* change, called being converted, or born of God, in the Scriptures, with that preparatory and partial change, experienced in a penitent state. The truth is, many changes take place in a sinner's heart before he is renewed. The gospel finds him dead and stupid. It awakens him, and he *listens*. This is a change, but it is not conversion. When the sinner listens he *feels*. Very often he feels despair. This is another change, but still he is not regenerated. Thus, with all the stages of penitential feeling, they exhibit *changes*, but not *that* wonderful change which takes place at

* Wesley.

his conversion. As this is a point of some practical importance, I will establish it by a few simple arguments.

Repentance does not procure *power* over sin for the penitent. His language is that of a man in chains ; he feels and bemoans his bonds but cannot break away from them. From outward sins, as profanity, stealing or lying, he may indeed break away, but how to fulfil God's holy and spiritual law, he, as yet, knows not. Hence, he cries with the apostle, when describing his experience before justification, "*O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*" But, let that penitent pass from death unto life — let him be converted, and he will exclaim, "*There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death !*" Whoever heard a penitent sinner adopt this last quotation from Holy Writ ? Yet, if repentance be a fruit of regen-

eration, it would be appropriate to every newly awakened sinner.

It is, moreover, a fact, that penitents are overwhelmed with condemnation; while it is clear, that to those who are in Christ, "*There is no condemnation.*" Every penitent is also *conscious* of not being regenerated; hence, his prayer is for a new heart. To tell him he already has it, is to tell a man consciously blind that he can see. The Scriptures, also, place repentance before conversion. Their language is "*Repent and be forgiven,*" while, they nowhere command us to be converted and then repent; which, if the latter were a fruit of the former, would be the natural and proper order of the divine precept.

I must beg my dear reader to remember, that while these remarks refer to that sense of guilt, that bitter remorse and self-loathing, which overtakes the newly awakened sinner; and while it is strictly true that such a penitence invariably precedes regeneration, it does not follow that there is no penitent feeling after conversion. On the contrary, true believers never

cease to be penitents in a restricted sense. They will even grieve over past sin, over present deficiencies, over the lack of conformity in body, soul and spirit, to the holy law of God, which, but for the covering wing of heavenly mercy, would destroy them. But the repentance of believers is unattended by unmitigated sense of guilt, which condemns the penitent. It sees demerit, helplessness, sinfulness, and grieves; but at the same moment, faith grasps the atonement and the heart finds rest. This action of a penitent faith, after regeneration, is well described by Mr. Wesley.


“By repentance, we feel the sin remaining in our hearts, and cleaving to our words and actions; by faith, we receive the power of God in Christ, purifying our hearts and cleansing our hands. By repentance, we are still sensible that we deserve punishment for all our tempers, and words, and actions; by faith, we are conscious that our Advocate with the Father is continually pleading for us, and thereby continually turning aside all condemnation and punishment from us. By repentance we have an abiding con-

viction that there is no help in us ; by faith, we receive, not only mercy, but grace to help in every time of need. Repentance disclaims the very possibility of any other help ; faith accepts all the help we stand in need of, from him that hath all power in heaven and earth. Repentance says, ‘ Without him I can do nothing.’ Faith says, ‘ I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.’ Through him, I can not only overcome, but expel, all the enemies of my soul. Through him, I can ‘ love the Lord my God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength ;’ yea, and ‘ walk in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of my life.’ ” *

* Wesley’s Sermons.

CHAPTER IV.

SAVING FAITH EXPLAINED.

 HE Jews complained against God. God's anger burned. He sent fiery serpents among them. Thousands died. Thousands more lay sick and dying.

Moses interceded. God listened to his faithful servant. He bade Moses erect a brazen serpent on a pole, and proclaim that whoever looked upon it should live. It was done. The voice of the herald proclaimed God's plan of mercy to His perishing people.

Strange proclamation! Shall life come back to the dying, if his glassy eye can only direct a glance upon that brazen effigy? See, my reader! That

murmuring Jew is so swollen, it seems his veins will burst ; so covered with flowing ulcers, his death seems sure ; yea, the life-struggle is over ; the death-film is fast spreading over his burning eyes ; another breath or two and the death-agony will be done. But *he* hears that herald voice. He remembers the wonders of Juda's God, and with his remaining strength, turns his discolored and repulsive head towards the uplifted brass. His eye rests upon it. His heart believes in Jehovah's mercy. He expects instant recovery. And lo, how great the change ! His eyes grow lustrous, his color returns ; his size and natural shape are restored ; his ulcers disappear ; the fire in his blood goes out ; his pulse beats strongly ; and leaping upon his feet, he rejoices in the mercy of God.

Of this scene, our blessed Redeemer said, "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.*" It is therefore an illustration of the faith by which a sinner obtains pardon from the mouth of

grace, condemned, confessing the justice of that sentence which dooms him to eternal death, yet crying for mercy. When that sinner's mind sees the blessed Jesus lifted up on the cross to make atonement for sin, and he believes in his heart that, because Christ was so lifted up, God *now* accepts and forgives him, he is as instantly forgiven as the Jew was suddenly cured. God accounts him righteous, because he believes in Christ; and sends forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart, whereby he instantly cries, "Abba, Father."

You see, serious reader, that in the case of the Jew, there was an unhesitating belief that what God said of looking at the brazen serpent was literally true. With this belief in the word of God, there was an inward reliance of the heart upon it, and an expectation of immediate recovery. The result agreed with the expectation.

And such a reliance of the heart on the promise of salvation, accompanied by present expectation of divine mercy, is justifying faith. It is "an act of

God. With his heart contrite, he lies at a throne of recumbency — we do rest upon Christ, as the stones in the building rest upon the corner-stone. Faith throws itself into Christ's arms; it saith, 'Christ is my priest — his blood is my sacrifice — his divine nature is my altar, and here I rest.' " * When a praying sinner throws himself thus into Christ's arms, and looks into his heart, expecting to find the divine witness there; according to his faith, so is the fact. He is justified.

If my reader is truly a child of God, he has experienced this faith. For "*without faith it is impossible to please God!*" and, "*there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*"

It may happen, nay, it is the undoubted fact, that, notwithstanding the simplicity of faith, many of Christ's little ones suffer much doubt and perplexity, concerning the genuineness of their faith. One of these will look back, often and anxiously, to the hour of his conversion, and inquire: "Did I really ex-

* Thomas Watson.

perience true faith?" He would give the world to have that question satisfactorily decided.

My dear, doubting reader, let me give you a key to this heart-aching problem. That problem, vastly important as it is to you, is easy of solution, where real faith has existed. If you have ever found a sweet peace filling your soul, when you were resting on the love of Jesus; and if that peace has been followed by renewed efforts after purity, then may you be sure that you have possessed true faith. Peace, and I affirm it with emphasis, that springs up in the heart while it is trusting in Jesus, *must* be genuine. It agrees with Scripture: "He that believeth shall be saved." You believed, that is, you trusted in Christ. You were saved, or in other words, you felt the peace of God in your soul.

If such has been your experience, away with your doubts and fears. Consider that point settled. Whatever you may be to-day, you have been a true believer. But if your peace has proceeded from other causes, rejoice not in it, nor be satisfied. Be con-

tented only with peace that follows the resting of the soul on Jesus.

I have read of a beautiful woman, who was born blind. Every feature of her pensive countenance was lovely ; her form, too, was exquisitely moulded, but she was blind !

A physician, of superior skill, at last performed a critical operation upon her eyes. It was successful, and her spirit flashed forth rays of light, which added fresh beauty to the beautiful. She gazed, for the first time, on nature, on art, on her friends. Conceive, if possible, of the joy she felt as the world revealed itself, like a new creation to her mind — of the unspeakable emotion she felt, in beholding her mother's face ; in seeing a father's smile, for the first time in her life, of thirty years.

But, she hears the gathering thunder-storm — very often has she heard it before, and heard, too, of the bright lightning flash. Now, she may see the grandeur of the elemental war. Sublimely grand to her, are those angry clouds, piled up, like mountains in the skies ; fearful is that vivid lightning-sheet, and

more fearful still, are those forked and fiery bolts which run along their terrible cloud-paths. Still she is riveted to the spot in amazement. When, alas ! a flash, bright and vengeful, strikes the wondering woman. She is taken up insensible, but not dead. When she recovers, her first words are : “ How dark ! Is it night ? Why have you closed the shutters ? ” It was not dark. The storm had passed, and a flood of sunshine had filled the room ; but she, poor hapless creature, was blind again. The bright visions of an hour, the happy smiles of her parents, were faded away, and, to her, the world was involved in an unending night.

This unhappy lady represents a class of persons, in, and around the Church of Jesus Christ. As she obtained sight, and enjoyed it only a few hours, before she was plunged into darkness again ; so these persons have once exercised a saving faith ; have rejoiced a while in its light ; and then sunk into gloom and condemnation. Their experience has been a path of darkness, with a momentary halo of light at the beginning. They really believed, enjoyed Scrip-

tural peace a little while ; and, since then, have groped their way in a dark and dismal wilderness.

These persons are certainly very unhappy. They are sincere, too. They really wish to know the path of peace. But they have missed it ; and missed it through ignorance — without intending it, they have “ *cast away their confidence.*” Let us examine a picture of such an experience, drawn from life.

I once knew a young man, who, having groped for six weeks in fearfulness and gloom, after the Lord Jesus, was induced to attend a prayer-meeting. There, for the first time, his heart said : “ Jesus, Jesus ! thou *art mine.*” With that trust, a heavenly peace overspread his soul. He went away changed in countenance, changed in feeling, a converted person. For several hours he rejoiced in God, his Savior. He closed his eyes that night, praising God.

When he awoke the next morning, his mind, of course, was vacant ; and his heart, by a necessary consequence, was without emotion. He looked within himself for the joy of the last evening. It was not there. He was distressed beyond measure.

“ Ah,” he cried, “ I was deceived. My religion was not genuine.”

This hasty conclusion being made, gross darkness filled his soul, a deep horror overspread his spirit. Still he did not yield without a struggle. But he struggled in a *wrong* direction. He tried to *make* the feelings he had yesternight. By a forced effort of mind, he endeavored to bring them back. Vain attempt. The cloud grew darker; the darkness became like that of Egypt, such as might be felt. It was very long before that young man again found real peace.

Wherein did his mistake lie? Where did his error begin?

Not in the vacant state of his mind, and in the unfeeling state of his heart, in the waking moment. Those states were unavoidable. In sleep, he had, of necessity, abandoned the helm of reason and of feeling: they were led by the imagination, into the fancies and vagaries of “dreamland.” On waking, therefore, no positive state of feeling could exist. He should have taken the helm of reason into his

hands, given a right direction to his thoughts, and then his feelings would have arisen sweetly and promptly. Had he reflected a moment on the cause of his last night's joy, he would have seen it to be the fruit of that faith, which said: "Jesus thou art mine." But he expected the effect without the cause. Had he, on awakening and perceiving the vacancy of his heart, gone, with earnest prayer to a throne of grace, still crying, "Jesus, thou art my Savior," all would have been well. Faith would have brought feeling; he would have gone on his way rejoicing. Instead of this, he exercised no faith; made no new appropriation of Christ to himself, but rather cast his faith away, by saying: "I am not saved. Christ is not my Savior."

I have feared that our churches lose many promising converts, and that many of our professing Christians live in sorrow and doubt from this cause. Some, brought into darkness, like that young man, linger awhile in discouragement around the sanctuary and then break away entirely from its altars; others remain seeking in vain for light, hoping for a more

cheering experience : sinning, and repenting, unhappy in themselves and useless to the Lord Jesus and his church.

How unspeakably important it is for all to learn this simple lesson. *Faith is not merely one act of trust in Christ, but an unlimited succession of acts.* That is, a man cannot *retain* the Christian character with the one first act of trust, by which he is justified. He must perpetuate that act. His heart must continually repeat the language of its first faith,

“ Lord, I am lost,
But Christ hath died.”

If a man fall overboard at sea, and a life buoy is thrown to him, he is not saved because he grasps that life buoy for a moment or two and then lets it float away. No ! he must grasp it firmly. He must rest upon it ; hold on to it, amid the roaring waters until his shipmates come to his relief. It is so with Christ. Sinking into hell, I cry to God for help. He gives me Jesus his crucified Son. “ Trust on him,” he says, “ and I will save you.” My sinking spirit reaches after that Savior. It grasps him and feels

safe. So far well. But if I let him go and say, "I am deceived ; Christ is not *my* Savior," I begin to sink again. The waters gather round my soul and I perish. I must then hold on. Every moment I must resolutely believe that God for Christ's sake forgives me and then I shall retain my peace ; and live what is appropriately called a "*life of faith.*"

There is no truth in the Scriptures more earnestly taught than the necessity of a constant and ever living faith. Paul calls a Christian life, "*the fight of faith.*" Wherefore ? Because this ever repeated trust in Christ is the only defence a child of God has against the weapons of his destroyer. It is for the same reason called "*the shield of faith.*" Backsliding is called "*casting away of faith or confidence,*" while to "*keep the faith*" is accounted the highest success of a believer. In short, every act of obedience, every acceptable duty, every sin subdued, every conquest won, every onward step taken, and every blessing gained in answer to prayer, the Scriptures ascribe to *faith*. How, then, can one act of

faith be sufficient? Impossible! utterly impossible. I must believe always, instantly, until I can say :

“ Every moment, Lord, I feel
The merits of thy blood.”

The real question, therefore, for the young Christian to ask, is, “ Do I now exercise a real faith in Christ? Have I now a sure, delightful confidence that God for Christ’s sake accepts me? ” If to this, he can answer “ Yea,” he can well afford to let the question of the reality of his past experience alone. It may be *interesting* to know when one first realized the blessings of the gospel. It is not, however, important. *The* question is, “ Do I now believe? ”

I have been at sea. Amid the solitudes of the ocean, I have sailed for weeks together with no other objects round me and my fellow voyagers, but the majestic ocean and the beautiful sky. These had their various aspects of terror and beauty. The ocean in the stilly calm, spread out like a vast mirror for the sun, was beautiful indeed ; lashed into fury by the wild wind, it was awfully sublime. The sky, now bright and cloudless with the glorious sun

dazzling on its breast, or at night spangled with stars, and fringed with many-colored cloud-wreaths, was lovely; overspread with the wings of the storm-demon, like the ocean, it too was greatly grand. Still the varieties of nature grew monotonous. He longed for the sight of humanity, for home and *terra firma*.

A sail has hove in sight. The cry of "Sail ho," from some vigilant watcher, has brought all on board to the taffrail. A short gaze at the horizon has revealed the dim form of a ship to every eye. All have seen something, they called it a ship, many miles distant. Very soon, some have declared her class, whether ship or brig, merchant vessel or man-of-war. But to others she remained longer undefined, and it would be long before every eye could discern what had been visible to others at almost their first glance. Differing in opinion as to her class, they yet all agreed in the fact—*they saw a ship*.

It is thus with believers in Christ. They see Him with different degrees of faith. To one, his lovely form is full and distinct. Like Stephen, he cries :

"I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." To another, he is visible, but involved in a dim cloud yet. Firm of heart, that believer cries: "I know in whom I have believed." To a third, he is seen, but scarcely recognized. "My heart burns within me," he exclaims, as did the disciples at Emmaus, and yet, he dares not believe that he sees his Lord.

When a disciple of the latter class, hears the testimony of one of the former class, he is disposed to doubt his own faith, and to deny that he sees his Lord at all. This is wrong: fatally wrong. It is even foolish. What if among the gazers at the ship we just now described, one of them, who could not decide her quality when all the rest could see her to be a brig, should therefore say, he saw no ship at all. Because he could not see as clearly as they, should he therefore say he could not see at all? You smile at his supposed folly. Yet the case is that of the man, who, because he cannot as yet see so much of his Lord's glory and beauty as his fellow disciple, denies the reality of what he does see.

This should not be. Faith has degrees. One believer grasps the promise with a giant's strength, another clasps it with the weakness of a babe. Yet the faith of one is as real as the faith of the other, and as the babe's strength will increase with its growth, so will faith strengthen by exercise. And he, who to-day considers himself the weakest of Christ's disciples, may scripturally expect to have a faith as strong as Stephen's, as victorious as Paul's.

Hold on, then, lamb of the flock, to thy faith! Resolutely believe Christ is thine and thou art Christ's. Be afraid to doubt, for doubt is presumption. To doubt is to deny God — to contradict the word of his grace. He has said it — he cannot lie — if you believe you shall be saved. Then it must be so. To cast yourself on Christ, and to say in your heart, "God will not accept me," is an act of terrible wickedness. Do not for your soul's sake commit it. But stand on his promise. Say, God has promised; I believe I am accepted. Let no thought of a stony heart, a want of feeling, or any thing else, hinder thee. Thou art not to be saved for having feelings,

or tenderness of spirit, but because Christ died. Nay, thy very hardness gives thee claim, for it was to change the stony heart to flesh, to save the guilty, that Jesus offered up himself to God. Believe, then, my dear reader. Believe now — believe always, and thou wilt surely be saved.

CHAPTER V.

THE OPERATIONS OF FAITH.



ET thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee. Thus spoke the Almighty to Abraham. Did he obey? He did. The sacred chronicle says, "*He went out, not knowing whither he went.*" Yes, he forsook his home, his country, the friends of his youth, all the pleasant associations of his early life, and went forth, a pilgrim wanderer, he knew not whither. Henceforth, he must dwell with strangers; he must move through hostile countries; he must be a man, marked by all men as singular and differing from the whole world. Nor could he explain himself so as to be comprehended, because his motive was spiritual, and to an idolatrous world inexplicable.

Abraham's emigration was, therefore, one of the most sublime instances of human reliance on the Divine veracity, recorded in the history of man! God promised him, in his descendants, the possession of Canaan. Without visible proofs, or outward probabilities, relying solely on the promise of God, he took the required steps to inherit the promise. He went fearlessly into hostile nations; he crossed wildernesses without terror; he became a homeless wanderer, yet without any apprehension of want or danger. "I am obeying Jehovah! He will provide! My children shall dwell in Canaan! I shall have a city out of sight;" was the language of his confiding spirit.

This was true, saving faith—a practical confidence in God. And this is the confidence which every true believer should have in his heavenly Father.

It is a believer's privilege to have *unlimited* and *abiding* confidence in God. He may feel always that, both in things spiritual and temporal, God will do the very best that can be done. He may dismiss

all distressing fears concerning the present or future. With David he may say of this life and its necessary blessings: "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;*" and, in obedience to Christ, he may expel trouble from his breast. What Christian can *fear* when Christ so sweetly whispers: "*Let not your heart be troubled.*" "*Fear not, little flock.*" "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added into you.*"

These texts are ample foundations for the strongest confidence. They authorize us to expect sufficient spiritual aid to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and they give a pledge that in this life a true Christian shall never suffer *real evil*. He shall have food and raiment, property and blessing, sufficient to enable him to do God's will in the best manner and to gain eternal life.

Our sensitive and selfish natures shrink from afflictions. We look upon them as ghastly spectres or haunting ghosts. Hence, when they enter our habitations and lay our bodies on sick beds; or burn our property, bring confusion upon our business arrange-

ments, and plunge us into a chaos of financial difficulties, we let our faith sink lower and lower. Unbelief rises, and we doubt whether God is really doing for us all he has promised to do.

A certain father once took his son to sea. He was a naval officer of some celebrity, and his purpose was to make his son eminent in the naval service. To accomplish this end, he saw it necessary to have his son become a thorough seaman. He wished him to understand every part of a sailor's duty.

When the lad went on board his father's ship, he naturally expected some indulgence. The transition from an elegant home, a kind mother, accomplished sisters, to the rough and stormy life of the sailor, was very great. He hoped, therefore, for he knew his father to be kind, to escape the *severer* duties of his station.

But he was self-deceived. Once at the post of duty, his father made no distinction. In the dark and dreary night, he was ordered aloft with his companions. Once, when dreadfully sea-sick, he ventured to his father with a request to be excused.

“Do your duty, sir!” was the stern reply; and as the boy mounted the giddy mast that night, he, for the first time, doubted his father’s love.

Like his young shipmates, he sometimes committed little misdemeanors—he violated some of the minuter rules of naval discipline. “My father is Captain,” was his inward thought; “I shall have indulgence.” Again he was deceived. The rebuke upon him fell sterner and more severe than on any other lad. Once more he doubted his father’s love.

This lad was of buoyant spirits and of daring mind. He prided himself in feats of skill and courage. One day he climbed the topmast height of the taper mast, and, to the terror even of the sailors, stood upright on the main truck. At that instant, his father came up from the cabin. “See your son, sir!” exclaimed his Lieutenant, pale with fear. One glance of his eye, a sudden rush into the cabin, a moment’s time, and that father stood with rifle pointed toward his son, shouting: “Jump over board, sir, or I will shoot you.” The boy leaped into the sea and was

saved. Not understanding the object of his father, the lad again doubted his father's love.

The cruise of nearly four years was ended and the lad and his father were once more in the halls of their ancestors. The boy had become almost a man. He was well skilled in seamanship, and the service could not produce a more skilful and promising young officer than he. In their home, too, the father was as tender and affectionate as he was prior to the cruise. The youth wondered at the mystery of his parent's conduct. Stern and severe at sea, but kind and loving at home : what could be his real character ?

The father and son are closeted. "My son," says the father, "you have probably wondered at some parts of my conduct. I compelled you to go aloft when you were sea-sick. I rebuked you severely for your occasional faults. It was painful to me to do these things, but *your interests* required them. I meant, if possible, to make you a brave and finished seaman. The things you felt most keenly about, were the most necessary for your final profit. When

I threatened to shoot you as you stood on the main truck, it was to save your life. Had I expostulated a moment you would have fallen. There was no way to save your life but to force you to jump into the sea. I have aimed in all these things to secure your benefit."

The reader can readily imagine that such an explanation would entirely remove the doubts, which the apparently harsh discipline of the father had excited in the son. He would even condemn himself for having doubted at all; and wonder at the mental stupidity which prevented him from entering into his father's wise designs.

Precisely similar are the dealings of God with believers. His children cannot be discovered by any outward providences; nor distinguished from sinners by *visible* signs of heavenly favor. Nay, they are on the other hand, often sorely afflicted. A pious Joseph is maligned, persecuted and oppressed; a faithful David is hunted like a beast of prey by his wicked enemies; a resolute Daniel is cast into a den of lions for his faithfulness; a submissive Job is stripped of his

precious things and made a spectacle of desolation ; a faithful Jeremiah is cast into a pit ; a devoted Stephen is given up to the violence of gospel haters ; a zealous Paul is compelled to carry a thorn in the flesh, and an affectionate John to be an exile on lonely Patmos.

The key to all this suffering in the disciples of the Savior is furnished by that apostle who wrote that : "*All these things work together for good to them that love God ;*" and "*These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*"

Here we have the solution of these untoward Providences which sometimes successively overtake a pious Christian. God is aiming to make his salvation sure. To him the *present* convenience of the believer is nothing compared to his *eternal* blessedness. The happiness of the disciple *in this life* is not the *end* of God's gracious providences : the *end* with Him in his elevation to glory.

This, then, is one work of faith. To be unmoved, confident and calm in the darkest hour. However

severely tried ; however storm-tossed, however much threatened with destruction, to indulge no doubt in God. Like a boy at sea, who retained his childish buoyancy in the midst of a terrible storm, which strained the ship to the limit of her endurance and made the most practised sailor tremble in expectation of instant death. Seeing him so cool, a sailor said to him, “ Are you not afraid ? ”

“ No,” was his prompt reply.

“ But the gale is very terrible,” responded the sailor.

“ I know it. *But my father's at the helm !* ”

Admirable confidence ! would that the children of God would always maintain such faith in their father, and learn to say in every conflict and danger, “ *My father is at the Helm.* God is ruler. He is pledged to secure my safety. I cannot suffer real evil.”

“ *What we know not now we shall know hereafter,*” is an inspired statement. It is true. As the naval officer explained his conduct to his son, so will Jehovah condescend to shew his motives in sending heavy trials on his chosen one. The weeping mother shall

know why God took that sweet babe from her breast; the widow shall be satisfied that God was kind in taking away her life's chief delight—the friend and partner of her youth; the orphan shall understand the cause of his being left to the cold charities of a heartless world; and the merchant shall have the mysteries of his many unforeseen reverses revealed. Wait, then, in faith, dear reader, for the issue of your afflictions. Believe with all your heart that all will terminate well; that when you have overcome and are joined to the hosts of heaven, and think of your bitterest affliction,

“ This note above the rest shall swell,
My Jesus hath done all things well.”

There will also be a constant necessity in your experience for what I would call a *special faith*. To explain my meaning, let me imagine a young man dependent upon his father. They live together in perfect harmony. The father freely and lovingly furnishes an ample supply for his son's necessities, and the son in return is affectionate, confiding and

obedient. He has an unshaken confidence in his father's love and ability. Therefore his mind is untroubled on the question of his earthly subsistence.

But one day, the young man perceives a very fine opening for himself in business. To enter it, he needs a particular sum of money. He can only obtain it of his father.

“Will my father furnish me with this money?” would be a first and necessary question in his mind. To solicit this aid from the father, every reader can at once perceive, requires a special act of mental confidence in the youth. He might doubt his father's disposition to do *that particular favor*, without being at all shaken in his established conviction of that father's love. To solicit it, he must have a special and peculiar belief that he will do *that particular favor*.

So with your faith. While you maintain an abiding belief that God for Christ's sake accepts you now; and that Christ as the administrator of the universe is ruling all terrestrial things for your final profit; you will also require a *special* faith, for

victory over the peculiar temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Hence, when Paul exhorted believers to lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily beset them, &c., he bade them attempt these things, "*Looking unto Jesus :*" i. e., by exercising an especial faith in him. His own exercises for the removal of that troublesome "*thorn in the flesh*" will illustrate this point. He had a saving faith when the thorn came. Feeling it to trouble him, he sought God thrice, in believing prayer, to remove it. God heard that request, and answered it too, but not as Paul expected. He said in effect, "I cannot take it away: it is for your profit; but my grace is sufficient for thee." Now when Paul felt this thorn piercing him, he would require a special faith, in addition to that which joined him to Christ; or rather that faith which saved him would require an especial direction. It must believe that this identical affliction was permitted in love, and that the grace of Christ would enable him to bear it.

So the young Christian will need to give an

especial direction to *his* faith. Does he feel the spirit of a wicked world stealing into his soul? He must cast himself on Christ and believe that in answer to Christ's mediation, he is endowed with power to overcome it; and he will, like Lazarus escaping from the bonds of the grave, rise delivered from the world's power. Does he feel a besetting sin, say pride, or envy, or anger, pushing at him sorely? He must *believe* that for Christ's sake the Spirit gives him power over it, and he will find *that* sin instantly under his feet. And so of any sin, or temptation; a vigorous faith in Christ for present victory will always overcome it. Any grace or blessing promised will also be certainly obtained when faith undoubtingly pleads the promise which contains it.

You will, without doubt, often hear professing Christians complain that *they* do not realize these scriptural fruits of faith. They will not affirm that no one does — that Scripture promises are false. But *they* believe, and yet do not experience power to overcome their sins.

I will illustrate their case and at the same time guard you against a dreadful evil.

Stella is a member of the visible church. She was, when in her first love, eminently devoted to Christ ; and, as a consequence, enjoyed great peace. But by neglecting a strict and earnest observance of the duty of secret prayer, her love declined. At that crisis in her religious experience it became fashionable, in her neighborhood, for the ladies to wear very large cameo brooches. Stella was induced to purchase one.

The first Sabbath on which she wore it, a pungent discourse from the preacher aroused her lukewarm heart, and she resolved to begin her spiritual life anew. Accordingly, she entered her closet to commune with God. Dropping upon her knees, she looked upwards and began to breathe forth her confessions to her heavenly Father. As her heart warmed, she endeavored to exercise faith and to be once more in delightful confidence at the feet of her Savior. But in that moment her conscience suggested that the useless cameo brooch ought to be

given up ; that it was only worn to gratify pride, and therefore her Savior could not smile upon her, if she retained it. The issue was made very plain to her mind. She saw that to cast herself on Christ without yielding up the ornament would be daring presumption.

What did Stella do? She did not in so many words say, "I will not give it up ;" but she ceased struggling for acceptance, offered a few more languid petitions and rose from her knees conscious of having increased the distance between her soul and Christ. She was inwardly resolved to wear the beloved ornament — the outward indication of inward lukewarmness.

The case of Stella is a picture of very many minds. Hundreds of professing Christians try *in vain* to exercise faith because a fleshly lust, a worldly love, a besetting sin, or a popular habit, has enthroned itself in the heart. Faith, in such cases, is an impossibility. Yea, the very effort to exercise it, *while the idol is reserved*, is a bold insult to God. Beware, young disciples, how you fall into this sin.

Write it on your heart with a pen of iron, that all sin must be brought as a sacrifice devoted to destruction, whenever you draw near to God. Say, with David, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.*"

Faith is called "*The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ;*" that is, by faith we confidently expect to enjoy the eternal blessings for which we hope, and feel an assured conviction of the existence of spiritual and unseen things.

Hence it is an important part of the operation of faith to surround the mind with vivid images of spiritual and eternal things. The mind, through such a faith, will apprehend eternity as a reality, not as a mere fancy — as a glorious substance, not as a fitful shadow. Faith must see Jesus standing at the right hand of God ; it must behold its mansion prepared and ready ; its robe and crown "*laid up.*" It must listen to the song of the redeemed, and bring the whole scene, as far as revealed, so close to the mind as to be conscious of only a slight veil between itself and glory. Every revealed fact must become living

and real to the mind—as visible and tangible to the eye and ear of faith as terrestrial things are to the senses of the body.

Think not, young Christian, that such a realization of spiritual things is impossible. Elisha's faith saw the angels of God keeping faithful watch around him in their fire chariots. Stephen, the first of the noble army of Christian martyrs, could exclaim: "*Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*" Glorious vision! Would that it were ever present to the faith of the modern church.

When the world of glory is thus realized by faith, the believer is wonderfully stimulated and sustained in fighting the battles of salvation. He can keep this world under his feet, because he sees a better within his reach. He can resist temptation, because he is conscious of his Savior's presence. He can feel raptures of love, because the lover of his soul is ever visible in all his transcendent loveliness. He can maintain a habit of prayer, because he is sure that his petitions are welcome in the court of heaven. O,

it is a blessed and profitable thing to realize eternity!

But let me assure you, young disciple, that this operation of faith is not gained without effort. Years of worldly living have habituated you to a life of sight. Your mind has been a *camera obscura* on which none but sensible images have been painted. This habit is hard to be overcome. Sensible things surround you. They easily affect you. They make strong appeals for your undivided attentions.


Effort then, I repeat, is needful. You must have seasons for silent meditation. You must read what is revealed concerning eternity, and let your mind dwell on the statements of the bible until they are felt to be realities. Let the bible lead your mind to heaven. Place yourself among its splendors and glories. Yield yourself up to the emotions which they excite. Study them, until your soul flutters its wings as if ready for its instant flight, and, while yet in the body, inspires the spirit of its future home. Do this, and when you go forth to busy life, carry these images with you. Speak of them to your

religious friends, and you will learn to say habitually —

“ There is my house and portion fair ;
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home ;
For me, my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

 DOES God make known to a Christian, and especially to a young Christian, the fact of his acceptance and pardon by a direct communication to his mind?

This is a solemn and momentous question. The young disciple should approach it prayerfully, in the spirit of a little child; earnestly, that he may know the truth as it is in Jesus. He should study it practically; for if the Spirit *directly* assures the child of God of his adoption, then is he no child of God who does not possess that inward witness. He is yet a stranger to the privileges of sonship and should bestir himself lest, being without the favor of God, he should perish everlastingly.

Let me draw an imaginary picture from which to elicit an important truth.

An absolute monarch has a dissolute son. He endures the follies of this thoughtless prince for several years. He expostulates, pleads and censures in vain. The prince increases in violence. At last he publicly insults his father. For this crowning offence, he is disinherited and sentenced to perpetual banishment. Disowned, exiled, no longer a prince, he is driven beyond the confines of his father's empire, and leads a wandering, unhappy life.

But though disowned, he is still beloved. The *father* is stronger than the *monarch*. His heart yearns after his lost son. His prayers go up for his safety, and for his restoration to virtue. It is plain to the whole court, that however just and necessary the punishment of the prince, the father is a great, perhaps the greater sufferer.

At last the cup of the old king's affection runs over. His full heart must burst or find relief. He yields to love. He writes and sends his son a letter, full of pity, blotted with tears of regret for the

Prince's folly, and offering him free restoration to his home and privileges, on condition of a hearty repentance, a frank confession, and a genuine amendment of life.

This letter, so touching in its language, betraying so clearly the bitter anguish of his father's soul, arouses the wandering prince to a conviction of his wickedness. He too weeps hot tears over the letter. He repents. He amends his life. He sends a reply, frankly acknowledging his guilt and soliciting his father's pardon with permission to return home.

There is no doubt that such a confession would greatly relieve the feelings of this unhappy prince. But, if he received no reply could he be *happy*? The silence of his father would be torture to his heart. Dreadful anxiety would gnaw his spirit as with a serpent's tooth. True, the letter promised forgiveness, with restoration to home and privileges, on certain conditions. True, these conditions have been fulfilled. But a *token* — an evidence — a proof — that his father *is* satisfied and *has* forgiven him

is necessary to make him happy and to induce his return to his long lost home. Without this, the *pledge* of the letter would be insufficient.

Now, in at least two particulars, this illustration exhibits the relation of a sinner to God. He is a child disinherited, cast off for his wickedness, under fearful sentence of perpetual banishment from his father's house and honors. 2. His divine Father has sent him proposals of reconciliation through Jesus Christ, on certain conditions specified in the Bible.

When those offers of compassion are brought home to a sinner's soul ; when Love has broken his heart ; and seeing his guilt, his ruin and his wretchedness, the poor penitent weeps bitter tears and breathes forth his humble confessions, does he not require some *token* or *evidence* that his offended father is satisfied, and has really pronounced him forgiven and adopted ? Will there not be a deep, agonizing, yearning of the soul to *know* what Jehovah has actually done in his behalf ? And is it not *pre-*

sumable that the God of Love has provided some agent, through whom he will send the blessed intelligence ?

Some will tell you that the only witness, by whom you may know your adoption, is the Word of God. They will say that "The whole of His (the Holy Spirit) witness, consists in filling, affecting and influencing our spirit, with the sweet persuasion that it is the 'truth of God,' that we are *warranted* to believe ourselves the children of God, because all our faith is in the Son of God." *

The objection to this view, is, that it does not go far enough. As far as it goes it is true. The Spirit does *fill*, *affect* and *influence* the heart of a penitent to believe, or to feel a *sweet persuasion* that the word of God warrants him to believe that he is a child of God, because he has faith ; but when the soul feels that persuasion, and actually rests itself on Christ and his promises for acceptance — yea, when in accordance with the truth of God, it believes itself accepted and adopted, does the Spirit make no further

* Robert Phillip — Guide to the Perplexed.

communication? Is there no sweet persuasion, wrought in the heart, that God has really adopted him? Is the solemn *act* of God, by which he changes the relation of a sinner from alienation and banishment to sonship and restoration, left to be a matter of mere inference from the Bible? O, no! Blessed be God, it is not so left! for in the moment that the sinner rests on Christ, and consequently becomes a son of God, then, as saith the apostle: "*Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*"

Let me refer you again, to the case of the banished prince. I left him in a state of penitence, waiting for a reply to his sorrowful confession of guilt. Though submissive to his father's wishes, and confident of his father's veracity, yet doubtful of himself, he is tortured with a fear, lest, in his father's judgment, the conditions of restoration are not fulfilled. He longs, ardently and painfully, for an *assurance* of pardon from his father.

At length, let us suppose, one of the highest dignitaries of his father's court arrives. With words of

friendship, he assures him that his father has forgiven him ; that he invites his return ; that he has sent him royal apparel and precious things, as a proof and pledge of his reconciliation. This witness, coming directly from his parent, and agreeing in his testimony with the pledge contained in the letter, would afford the prince perfect satisfaction. His doubts would cease. His fears would vanish away. With a joy hitherto unfelt, he would rejoice over his restored and happy condition.

And since a similar testimony to that act of Jehovah, whereby a poor alienated heir of hell is made an heir of God, is necessary to his comfort and satisfaction ; God, in his infinite condescension, has appointed the Holy Spirit to be "*The Witness of Adoption*" to the hearts of believers. Having wrought a persuasion of the truth of God in their hearts, and made them *feel* their lost and exposed state, he has next persuaded them that they may safely trust in Christ ; led by his delightful guidance, they have trusted in Christ, assured that the promise of pardon would then be kept. The promise was

kept. God forgave them, and declared them his children ; then they received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cried, “ Abba, Father ;” for says the apostle : “ *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*”

Hence, if you are a true convert, my dear reader, you have felt and do now feel, “ a satisfactory and joyful persuasion, produced by the Holy Ghost, in your mind, that you are now a child of God.”* You have “ an inward impression on your soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to your spirit that you are a child of God ; that Jesus Christ hath loved you, and given himself for you ; that all your sins are blotted out, and you are reconciled to God.” †

How is this persuasion wrought, and how does it come into the heart ? Truly, I cannot tell. The mode of the Holy Spirit’s operation is a secret which human wisdom cannot explore. Christ compared it to the mysterious winds. “ *The wind,*” said he,

* See Walton, on the Witness of the Spirit.

† John Wesley.

“bloweth where it listeth. Ye hear the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

But does the Spirit testify to our adoption by an outward voice ? “No, nor always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose, that he always applies to the heart, (though he often may,) one or more texts of Scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong, though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm ; the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered.”*

The convert should, however, be cautious not to judge himself by the standard of any individual experience of this blessed witness. He may hear some believers speak, in the strongest terms, and in the most confident manner, of the distinctness of the Spirit’s testimony. His own experience may be less com-

* Wesley.

forting, and the testimony of "the Witness" more doubtful. He may therefore conclude himself a stranger to its enjoyment. This would be rash and dangerous. The young Christian should remember, that, as there are wide degrees between the lowest whispers of the breeze and the loudest tumults of the storm, so there are wide differences in the distinctness with which the blessed testimony is heard by believers. To some, it is soft as the lowest whisper of the harp, to others it is as the voice of the storm — distinct, to the exclusion of all doubt. "One man," says Walton, "may possess a more joyous and permanent testimony of his acceptance, than his Christian brother. There is often something in the character of the individual mind which has great influence.

"There may be, even in the experience of the same individual, very considerable diversity ; as all experience shows. There may be times of brighter and less clear manifestations of the love of God. In certain cases, that bright unclouded light, which breaks often suddenly upon the mind of the anxious

penitent, and for a time banishes every doubt, every fear, may suffer a very painful obscuration. There may be reasons, partially known and partially concealed, why it diminishes in its clearness, declining gradually, till, like the last ray of twilight when the dying day expires, it totally disappears. On the other hand, where the communication of the Holy Spirit's witness is gradual and imperceptible, (a case not altogether unknown, though of rare occurrence,) the first faint ray of the morning may illustrate the earliest commencement of the inward testimony ; and the gradual increase of light, still advancing, till it arrives at the meridian hour of perfect illumination, may represent the progress of the soul toward the full assurance of faith. Between these two points, however, of total darkness on the one hand, and of meridian brightness on the other hand, as many intermediate degrees may probably exist in the Scriptural experience of a Christian, as in the illumination of the natural world." *

Let me entreat you, young Christian, to try yourself on this great gospel doctrine. If you are truly

* See Walton on the Witness of the Spirit.

a child of God, you have the witness in yourself. Do not shrink from a trial of heart by this test. If you are not truly God's, it is better to know it now, than to defer the discovery until the day of judgment. To-day, the defect may be remedied; then, it will be irreparable. Come, then, dear reader, and search your heart! Has it ever thrown itself on Jesus in the sweet reliance of faith, and there felt itself moved to cry, "Abba, Father!" If so, blessed art thou lamb of the flock! Cherish that witnessing Spirit. Part with any thing else! You may retain it always. If you should lose it, seek it earnestly again. Dare not sleep without its presence. Let it be a sacred point with you, never to pass a day without knowing yourself an adopted child of God. Thus, will your days pass in pleasure, and your end will be glorious.

"May I not be deceived? Is it not a possible thing to imagine myself a possessor of this witness, while I am really a child of perdition?"

Yes, most certainly, such deception is possible, but it is by no means necessary. God has joined it to another witness; even that of your own spirit.

Where the spirit of adoption exists, there is also an inward experience from which our own minds are enabled to infer the filial relation we sustain. When these two things are united, deception is impossible.

What is the nature of that inward experience? Study the following picture and you will understand.

Behold that man under sentence of death! How pale and sad his countenance! How wild and distracted his gaze! What a storm rages in his soul! How terrible the forebodings of his spirit! What heart-agony and distress heave his bosom. He is disconsolate and inconsolable.

A messenger opens the door of his cell. Standing on the threshold, he exclaims, "You are a prisoner no longer. The governor has pardoned you. Here is an order for your dismissal from prison."

How sudden and how great is the change which now comes over the spirit and the person of the criminal. As when the dark waves of Galilee ceased their tumultuous roaring and sunk down into the quietude of a calm sleep at the bidding of Jesus Christ, so his excited and terrified soul is soothed and hushed to

peace. The storm is silenced ; his fears are hushed ; his breast grows calmly peaceful ; joy swells his heart, and a burning gratitude to the friends who procured his pardon rises in his soul.

As the condition of the sinner, to whom the spirit of adoption comes, is similar to that of the criminal, in that he is also delivered from a sentence of condemnation, it might be expected that similar results would take place in his mind. Accordingly, we find the apostle describing the fruits of the Spirit to be “ *Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ;*” and he adds, “ *they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*”

Hence, if the persuasion of your acceptance in Christ, was followed by these fruits of the Spirit, then is it impossible for you to be mistaken concerning the genuineness of that “ *Witness.*” Deceived you cannot be, for no impression of the imagination could have brought forth these hallowed fruits.

How shall I know that these fruits exist in my heart ?

Just as you know any operation of your own mind. By consciousness. Cannot you decide whether you ever underwent a transition from alarm to peace, from terror to joy, from fear to love? Have you never felt what the prophet so well expressed, "*Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me?*" Have you not felt conscious that God regarded you with complacency and not with wrath? Has not your heart delighted in him, with the delights of love? As you admire, rejoice over, commune with, and serve your human friends, have you not, in the same manner admired, rejoiced and communed with God? Has not joy swelled your heart, when you have thought of God's goodness? Have you not found pleasure in God's worship, in the society of his dear followers, and in doing his holy will? If so, and surely these things have been found in your experience, you may say with the beloved disciple: "*Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit;*" and again, "*we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the breth-*

ren i. e.:” finding these fruits of the spirit in myself, I know that the Holy Spirit dwells in me and is thereby the author of that sweet persuasion that God is my father, which I find in my heart, and by which I exclaim :

“ My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear ;
He owns me for his child,
I can no longer fear ;
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And Father, Abba, Father, cry.

And now, before closing this chapter, young Christian, permit me to write one sentence more, deeply on your heart. *The wilful commission of known sins silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and excludes from the filial relation : while habitual indulgence in any one sin, whatever may be the raptures or emotions of the heart, is a demonstration that you are not now a child of God !*

Behold yonder boy ! He is an orphan. Left to himself he has become idle and dissipated. Bad company has corrupted his morals. He is in the high road to ruin.

But see ! A benevolent looking man approaches him. Gently he lays his hand upon the boy's shoulder. "Child," he says, "where are your parents ? "

"Dead !" he replies, softly, for he is touched with the old man's kind manner.

"Where is your home ? "

"I have no home ! "

"Poor child ! Will you be my son ? "

"I don't know."

"I will take you home and adopt you for my own son, if you will do one thing."

"What is that ? "

"I heard you use profane words, just now. If you will leave off swearing, I will adopt you."

"I will."

"Remember, if you swear at all, I shall send you from my house, and you will cease to be my child."

"Yes, sir, I will remember."

The boy is now the adopted son of a gentleman. Clothed suitably to his station, educated, refined, he is scarcely to be recognized as the same lad.

Let a brief space of time pass away in your imagination. The boy is playing in the street; his kind patron is passing; when, to his astonishment, he hears the boy utter the most fearful oaths. He utters them, too, with his eyes upon his patron, and with a look which shows that he is conscious of the forfeiture he makes by his profanity. Day after day passes, and the boy continues to violate the conditions of his adoption.

Can he, under these circumstances, remain the adopted son of his benefactor? Impossible.

In one particular the Christian resembles this boy. When his Heavenly Father adopts him, although it is for Jesus' sake, yet it is on one condition, viz : *that he leaves off sinning!* or, as St. Paul says : that he "*walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit!*" Whenever, therefore, a believer commits a wilful sin, he must cease to be a child of God; whenever a sin obtains a permanent conquest in a man, and rules over him as a tyrant, that man is any thing but a "*man in Christ.*"

How clear and explicit is the apostle John, on this vital point: “ *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. He that committeth sin is of the Devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*”

This testimony is both authoritative and conclusive. Sin consciously indulged, destroys our filial relation to God; and he who is under the servitude of a single sin and yet fancies himself to possess the “*Witness of the Spirit*,” is miserably deceived.

See to it, therefore, young convert, that sin does not have dominion over you. If anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, idleness, or any other sin, has a *throne* in your heart; if it sway a tyrant’s scepter over you; if you are under its dominion, be assured that you are the servant of sin and not the servant of God. “ *His servants ye are, to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey*,” said Jesus Christ. So that, as you cannot serve two masters, if you are the

servant of sin you cannot be the servant of Jesus Christ.

I do not mean by these remarks, however, that the adopted "heir of God" feels no "motions of sin" in his heart. No doubt every child of God often feels the deep strivings of the carnal mind. Powerful promptings to sin; fearful kindlings of the carnal and fleshly sparks, are familiar things in Christian experience. The flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit striving against the flesh, keep up a daily strife in the believer's bosom. But the evidence of his faith is, that the Spirit overcomes the flesh. Human weakness tremblingly asks, "*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" Christian faith replies, "*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Rejoice, then, young believer, in the witness and in the power of the Holy Spirit. While you feel in your heart, the fond emotions of love to God, the quiet peace of faith, and the power to subdue your rebellious nature, rejoice in the reality of the work of God. The persuasion of your sonship, yielding

these glorious fruits, is and must be from the Lord. Your corrupt nature, enthusiasm, Satan, or mistaken friends, might lead you to an imaginary experience, but they could not produce the "*fruits of the Spirit.*" These, *you* are conscious of possessing; you have also the inward persuasion in your heart of your adoption. *The Spirit* witnessing *with your spirit.* Taken together, these witnesses are infallible: therefore, I say, rejoice in your sonship. Cast away doubt and dismay. Throw all servile fear to the winds. Be strong. Yea, be strong in thy divine confidence; and he, who has begun the good work, will most assuredly keep thee to the end. Say, with the poet —

"In my Savior's intercession,

Therefore I will still confide,

Lord accept my free confession!


I have sinned, but thou hast died:

This is all I have to plead,

This is all the plea I need."

CHAPTER VII.

TEMPTATION.

 HE world is justly called “a vale of tears.” It is so to the true Christian, as well as to the sinner. Sorrow is the inalienable heritage of human nature. Grace may open a well of life in the converted heart ; but the fountains of grief will be there also. Paradoxical as it may seem, a Christian is both “a man of sorrows” and a man of rare enjoyment. He fully illustrates the saying of his endeared Master : “ *These words I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation ;*” he also realizes that,

“ The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.

No traveller ere reached that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briers in his road.
The world may dance along the flowery plain,
Cheered as they go by many a sprightly strain —
Where nature has her mossy velvet spread,
With unshod feet they yet securely tread.
But he who knew what human hearts would prove,
How slow to learn the dictates of his love ;
That hard by nature and of stubborn will,
A life of ease would make them harder still.
In pity to the sinners he designed,
To rescue from the ruins of mankind,
Called for a cloud to darken all their years,
And said, "Go, spend them in the vale of tears."

Among the sources of Christian affliction, temptation holds a high rank. Will the reader permit me to introduce the subject of temptation, by sketching a picture of real life ?

Yonder is a well dressed youth stepping down the steps of a merchant's office. He is an artied clerk, the son of wise and pious parents ; modesty and good sense are apparent in his mien. His appearance prepossesses the spectator in his favor.

But see, he meets a grave old man in the street. They shake hands and greet each other most hearti-

ly. That old gentleman is his uncle. Let us listen to a part of their conversation.

“Edward, have you a watch?” inquired the uncle.

“No, Sir.”

“Should you like to own one?”

“Yes, uncle, very much indeed.”

“I have thought for some time of giving you one. Let us step into this store and make a selection.”

They enter a store. The watch is purchased. Edward, full of thankfulness and gratified feeling, bids his uncle adieu, and runs home to publish his good fortune to his family.

The watch is exhibited to father, mother, and all the little ones. Young George, and laughing Ellen, have had it held to their ears at least a half dozen times to hear it tick, and Edward's present is the theme of family conversation at the dinner table. Edward was never so much gratified before.

Dinner is over. Edward is about to return to his

office. His father, in a weighty tone of voice, says,

“ Edward ! ”

“ Yes, Father.”

“ I want you to give your new watch to your brother William. As your Father, I assure you that in the end you will not regret it. Remember, I do not *compel* it. Do as you please.”

Edward looks surprised. He grows red and pale by turns. A violent conflict passes in his mind. But the struggle is soon over ; with a swelling heart and tearful eye, he gives the watch to his brother.

In a few days, his father presents him with a watch, more beautiful and costly than his first one. What he values still more, is, the commendation he receives for having so willingly obeyed, and so cheerfully trusted his father's word.

But this is not the only trial Edward encounters. He has a fellow clerk, who is a gay, dissipated youth. He has often spoken to his companions of Edward's quiet habits. Together, they resolve to seduce him into their own vile haunts and sinful habits.

“Edward, will you walk with me this evening?” asks his fellow clerk.

“I have no objection.”

They walk together. As his seducers have before arranged, they meet the clerks at a corner of the street. Edward is introduced. They shew him great attentions; their conversation is sparkling and enchanting. Edward is fascinated. At night he retires with a favorable opinion of his new associates.

After a few nights, he receives a ticket for a concert from his office companion, with a pressing invitation. “It is to be decidedly moral, highly respectable,” says his false friend. He assents. Goes to the concert, and is still more delighted with the young clerk and his party.

He is now a frequent companion of those gay youths. True, they grow less reserved, and utter things he is not pleased to hear. But, they are so fascinating, he is charmed, and their faults are overlooked.

The young sinners grow impatient to throw off

the mask and gain the unsuspecting Edward to their vices. They resolve on a bold stroke. He is to be taken to a theatre, under the impression that he is going to another concert.

The invitation is given and accepted. Edward joins the party and they proceed directly toward the play house, engaged in a most lively and spirited conversation. They are on the threshold. Edward pauses. "This is the Theatre!"

"Yes, but there is a grand concert to be performed here to-night."

Silenced, but not satisfied, Edward proceeds. He soon finds himself in one of the boxes. He feels uneasy and is silent. Soon the curtain rises. The actors tread the stage. He finds himself duped. With a wonderful resolution he takes his hat, darts a look of displeasure at his betrayers, and, in spite of their whispered entreaties for him to remain, hurriedly quits the enchanted spot. The spell is broken now. The object of his gay friends is clearly revealed to his mind. He rejoices in his escape and resolves to avoid them in the future.

In this picture the reader has seen Edward subjected to two kinds of trial ; but the agents in these trials of his principles had precisely opposite ends in view. His father tried him that he might have opportunity to exhibit his obedience and his confidence ; and thereby be personally benefited ; the young men tried him, that they might destroy him.

These temptations of young Edward illustrate the two classes of temptations, the young convert must make his mind up to contend with in his Christian experience. He will be tempted for the trial of his faith : he will be tempted to evil and to death. God will be the agent of the former class of trials, or temptations : Satan, men, the world, and his carnal nature, will be the agents in the latter class.

It is said, that “ *God did tempt Abraham.*” That temptation was a command to put Isaac to death, to offer him as a burnt offering to the Lord. The object of Jehovah in this temptation was to obtain an exhibition of Abraham’s confidence in His word ; not to lead Abraham astray. Properly speaking, it was a trial of his faith. Such trials are wholesome dis

cipline which our Heavenly Father sees necessary to administer for our profit. The convert must therefore make up his mind to expect them. He must not be uneasy under them, but he must wrestle to shew forth his faith, his submission, and his love to God, that “*his faith might be found unto praise and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*”

But when we are solicited to *evil*, we must not regard Jehovah as the agent of our temptation. “*Let no man say when he is tempted (i. e., to evil,) I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man, (i. e., to evil.)*”

The chief agent in tempting Christians is the Devil. “*Your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*” Tempting the pious into sin, is the Devil’s business. All his knowledge, skill and cunning are brought into diligent use, to accomplish the destruction of Christ’s little ones. He is a wary fowler spreading his nets in every field, and hiding his snares under every green tree. Wherever the seed of life is dropped, these he is laboring, with infernal energy, to prevent

its germination ; for, said Christ : “ *Then cometh the Devil and taketh the word out of their hearts ; lest they should believe and be saved.*”

You will often find the assaults of Satan very painful to endure. While in the Wartburg, the celebrated Luther endured the bitterest agony from the fiery darts of the adversary. Dr. Payson suffered intensely from temptations to infidelity. Objections to the word of God, such as infidels had never imagined, were thrust into his mind, and at times wrought up his pure mind into a state of torture. And all good and holy men have been familiar with the devices of this lost and fallen angel.

Should you, then, young convert, when on your knees endeavoring to commune with God, or when drawing near to the communion table, or when listening to the preached word, be conscious of blasphemous thoughts, hard thoughts of God and his Providences, strong fears, despairing views of yourself, impure imaginations, sudden inclinations to suspect the faithfulness of your friends and companions, and should these suggestions work your spirit up

to fear and agony, you may know yourself to be assaulted by the Evil One. You must not yield to them, and say, "I am no Christian. True Christians do not feel as I do." On your peril yield not so far to your great enemy. To concede your faith, because you are tempted, is to throw away your salvation merely to please your worst foe.

But Satan will tempt you *indirectly* as well as *directly*. Your nature has various propensities, such as hope, fear, acquisitiveness, anger and the like. These propensities have their appropriate excitants. Danger excites fear; gold excites covetousness; contempt kindles anger. To bring these excitants into combination with the propensities, is the way to arouse them: just as the spark kindles the tinder, or friction lights the match.

If you are inclined to covetousness, Satan will tempt you by directing your mind to schemes and plans for growing rich. He will stimulate your imagination with golden visions, and urge you to plunge inextricably into worldly engagements.

If you are poor, when you pass the dwelling of

the rich, where the bright lights stream from the curtained windows, and from between the folds you can perceive the luxurious furniture, he will prompt you to contrast that proud abode of wealth with your own humble home. With the contrast will be mingled a temptation to discontent and to bitter complainings against the Lord.

Or, when rumors, which are ever floating upon the surface of society, like poisonous vapors in the air, bring you information of false reports concerning your reputation, he will tempt you to haughty feelings, to anger, malice and revenge.

Nor are these indirect temptations the least dangerous. They have been powerful to destroy millions. The fruit on the forbidden tree was the instrument of Eve's ruin and the world's distress. The mess of pottage beguiled Esau to surrender his birthright with its privileges. The vineyard of Naboth led Ahab to imbrue his fingers in innocent blood. The shekels of Naaman, the noble leper, prompted Gehazi to utter a dreadful lie. The fear of arrest and death in the High Priest's hall, moved Peter to the

infamous offence of denying his Lord, with shameful oaths and bitter curses. These, with other facts innumerable as the leaves of the forest, darkening the history of our whole race, prove the terrible power of indirect temptation.

Beside Satan, you will have still other tempters. Your fellow creatures will use their influence for your ruin. The wicked will endeavor to make you as vile as themselves. Without designing it, your own friends ; yea, your bosom companion and the familiar friend in whom you have trusted, will often be your tempters. By unkind remark, by insults, by neglects, by a wrong spirit, by bad example, by modes ever changing and various as your circumstances and their dispositions. These things will tend to excite their corresponding passions and desires, and thus lead you to the commission of sin.

In your own breast, too, you carry a tempter, perhaps the most dangerous one of all. "*Every man,*" says James, "*is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own heart's lust and enticed.*" Your propensities themselves will be powerful tempters. Not

satisfied with the innocent indulgence permitted by the divine law, they will burn and clamor for unlawful gratification. Carnal by nature, subdued, but not destroyed, by grace, your own heart will be your foe.

Thus what our "sweet singer" penned and sung, you will verify in your spiritual life. You may say, I am

"Surrounded by a host of foes,
Stormed by a host of foes within,
Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
Single against hell, earth, and sin."

Do you exclaim, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" Does this view of your exposed state alarm you and extort the cry: "*I shall one day fall by the hands of the enemy?*" If so, forbear! for above the noise of your spiritual combats, the sweet voice of the angel, who met a trembling Mary in the garden, sings, "*Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus.*" Your safety is *pledged*, notwithstanding the number, the power, the constancy and the bitterness of your tempters: "*For God is faithful, who will not suf-*

fer you to be tempted above what ye are able : but will with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

What are your temptations and dangers when compared with the help promised to you in this word of God? It is a matter of small moment how many foes assail a man if he possess ample ability to resist them. True, you have no ability of your own; but God is strong, and He promises that “*You shall not be tempted above what ye are able.*” Is not this sufficient! Will he fail you in your hour of need? Can you not boldly face all your enemies with this assurance of help? Martin Luther ventured into the very arms of his papal adversaries at Rome, at a time when they thirsted for his blood. The Pope and his emissaries were willing to pay any price for the great Reformer’s life; yet he boldly thrust himself into their arms. Why did Luther thus? The emperor had given him a safe conduct; i. e., he had guarantied his safety for a specific time. Luther had confidence in the Emperor’s truth; while his friends trembled for his safety, he felt calmly secure.

Will you have less confidence in God than Luther had in the German king? The God of truth guarantees your safety under the fiercest temptations. Is it not enough? Let Satan, the World, the Flesh, do their utmost, they cannot destroy you, they cannot compel you to sin. It is no sin to be tempted, for our spotless Jesus was "*tempted in all points like unto us, and yet without sin.*" Temptation is never sinful until it is consented to. It is like bait thrown by the angler to the fish — harmless when resolutely avoided; dangerous only, when the fish pauses to admire and to nibble. Let temptation be disregarded; let your heart resolutely say, "No," and however peculiar and tempting the bait, you are guiltless; but pause to *desire*, to *taste*, to *yield*, and you become guilty. Resist, and you remain innocent. Lift up your prayer to Christ. Say :

"Still nigh me, O my Savior, stand!

And guard in fierce temptation's hour,

Hide in the hollow of thine hand;

Show forth in me thy saving power,

Still be thy arms my sure defence;

Nor earth, nor hell shall pluck me thence.

Were you to enter a subterranean cavern, attended by a guide, you might at first fearlessly follow his footsteps. But, as you proceeded amidst the increasing darkness, your footsteps awakening echoes more and more fearful, and the glare of the torch, carried by your guide, growing more and more murky, a chill of horror would steal over your frame ; you would proceed reluctantly, probably you would stop and say to your guide : “ Sir ! is it safe to proceed ? ”

Should he reply : “ Perfectly so. I have conducted scores of persons a half a mile farther than where we stand ; ” you would be reassured. That others had trodden the cavern in safety would be a sufficient warrant of security to yourself.

I have written this familiar illustration to save you from stumbling where many have fallen. Young Christians especially, are apt to conceive their temptations peculiar to themselves. They think indeed that such thoughts, feelings and imaginations, as they endure, are evidences of a graceless state. Could they but know that other Christians feel the

same, their faith would strengthen, their courage rise, their hearts grow firm. Not knowing this, they write bitter things against themselves and sometimes "cast away their faith."

Be assured, then, dear young Convert, that there is no such thing as peculiar temptation. I mean, that no one person has temptations which some others have not. However fiery the dart, it has fallen upon others as well as upon you. However blasphemous the suggestion, it has been made to others before. God has declared this. "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man,*" is the divine testimony. Courage, then, tempted one! You explore a path well travelled. Millions have passed where *you* are passing; have suffered what *you* suffer; have endured triumphantly what you are struggling to endure. Consoling idea! Your temptations are *supportable* by such as you. God has kept many, weak as you are, under trials of equal magnitude, and He promises to keep you also. Trembling one! Lamb of the flock, can you ask for more?

Let us imagine a father with his child, compelled

to frequently pass a road, beside which is a chained lion. The child is fearful at first ; the father assures the little one of safety if he will walk close to his side. Frequent walks upon the road inspire the boy with confidence. His father then sends him alone. He pledges his honor to the child, that he may pass unhurt if he will keep in the middle of the path. For many days, he passes unharmed. One day, he ventures close to the lion's den and perishes. Is the father to blame ? Has his word proved false ?


Thus, if the young Christian expects the fulfilment of the divine promise, he must follow the divine guidance, or he will nevertheless perish. The word of God says, "*Watch and pray ;*" it bids you "*forsake the foolish ;*" not to "*walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners,*" or, in other words, to avoid every place, person and thing, which would be likely to lead you into sin. The observance of these directions is indispensable to victory. They are the conditions of the promise. If neglected, the promise will fail and God's truth

remain inviolate. But resist temptation *promptly* in its earliest beginnings ; fly to Christ in believing prayer, Watch. Look to Jesus under all the conditions of life, and your deliverance from all the snares and devices of Satan is sure.

Fear not temptation, then, young Christian. Dangerous as it is, fatal as it has been to millions, trying as it unquestionably will be to yourself ; yet, I repeat it, "*Fear not.*" He that is on your side is stronger than all that is against you. The love of Jesus is so deep, so unchanging, it will never forsake you. Whatever else fails you, the love of Christ will not. Whoever is false to you, Jesus will be "*Faithful and true.*" Fight manfully ! Resist valiantly ! Put on the whole armor of God. When the fight is severe, remember the example of Christ, who suffered such terrible temptations for your sake, and comfort yourself with these delightful words : "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tired, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

JOINING THE CHURCH.

 HERE are few scenes on earth more lovely, than a church of the Lord Jesus in the act of receiving a new convert to its bosom. The hour has been anticipated by the candidate with fear and pleasure. He has trembled at the responsibility to be assumed ; he has rejoiced at the privileges to be enjoyed. After much prayer and meditation, he at last stands before the church. How solemn and weighty in his deportment ! How calm and resolved in his feelings and purposes ! The church look on with prayerful interest. A new candidate for the prize of salvation is entering the race-course. A new member of the household of God is being ad-

mitted into the holy family. Glorious sight ! God approves it. Angels study it with pleasure.

The minister proposes the usual questions ; which being duly answered by the candidate, the right hand of fellow ship is given ; the convert becomes a member of the militant church ! Auspicious moment ! How touching and forceful the question : will he ever be admitted to the church triumphant ?

Beautiful as is this scene, exalted as is the privilege it confers, yet, many converts to Christ refuse to share it. They choose the imminently perilous and almost hopeless task of going to heaven alone. " They fix nowhere, or at least commune nowhere. No church is wide enough, or strict enough, or pure enough, or sound enough for them ; no one is completely modified to their taste. Constantine said to such a self-conceited Christian, ' Take a ladder, and climb to heaven by thyself.' If all were like minded with some, there would be no such thing as a church on earth." *

*Jay's " Christian Contemplated."

Let us imagine a company of men setting out on a pilgrimage to a distant land. The country they are leaving is attractive and outwardly beautiful ; but its climate is deadly. A poisonous malaria infects the atmosphere ; its inhabitants are sure to fade away and die in the prime of life. Yet, the bewitching beauty of its romantic scenery acts like a charm upon the people ; in the face of death, they remain and revel in its ruinous delights. They are the more inclined to this, because the road to a better clime is extremely difficult to travel—is infested with wild beasts, and many who attempt to cross, it return discouraged.

Yet there is a constant emigration going on. Many prefer present inconvenience to final ruin. They choose to suffer affliction temporarily, rather than to die prematurely and forfeit every precious hope of the human breast.

The pilgrims go in companies. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reach the “better land” alone. The solitary pilgrim is almost sure to fall a prey to the wild beasts, which roam that waste howling wil-

derness. Hence the pilgrims form themselves into bands for their mutual safety.

Let us fancy one of these pilgrim bands in the midst of the wilderness. The road is rough, hard, and thorny. The weak ones of the party grow discouraged, but the strong cheer them by words of kindness and hope. Some linger behind, but are urged to renew their journey by the exhortations of the rest. When clouds lower and the storm beats furiously upon them, they break forth into singing, and thus rouse each other's fainting spirits. At night they set a guard, they kindle their watch-fires to frighten away the beasts. By these, and similar means, they safely pursue their journey, and in due time reach the "land of promise."

On the edge of the wilderness, in the rear of the pilgrim band, may be seen a few solitary travellers, each walking alone, apart from the beaten path. At night, without a guard, they pitch each man his tent, but not to rest. The incessant roar of the beasts prevents their sleep. And every morning the number of those tents is lessened. As the pilgrim

band plunges deeper into the shadows of the wilderness, the lonely pilgrims diminish. The roaring lions devour them, or some "horrible pit" swallows them up.

You cannot be at a loss, dear young convert, to understand the meaning of my simple allegory. The infected country is the wicked world, a life of sin. The wilderness is the way from thence to glory; the band of pilgrims is the "Church of the living God;" the solitary pilgrims, those who profess to be converted, but refuse to join the church of Christ. The death of the lonely pilgrims is a type of the fall of those who do not unite with the people of God.

Lift up your eyes, my reader, and survey the past history of those who have been converted within the sphere of your acquaintance. It may be true of some, who joined the church, that like Demas they have loved the present world and forsaken Christ; but *most* who joined the church, have a hope of heaven to this very day. But where are those who did not join the church! Alas! they are nearly all gone

back, "like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

It is next to impossible to find a Christian with a *satisfactory experience*, who is not a member of the church of Christ. Most converts who fail of this duty, soon utterly fall away; the remainder live in uncertainty and gloom of heart. With the church, they reject the ordinances of Christianity; stumble into error and mistake; and rarely fail of missing the "path to glory and immortality."

There must be a reason for this almost universal falling away of those converts, who do not join the church. I will venture to suggest it.

Perhaps, if I inquire after the cause of the convert's refusal to unite with the people of God, the reason will clearly appear. What then is the cause?

Had I a band of these independent Christians before me, they would probably all give a different answer. One with seeming humility would say "I am unworthy;" another, "I cannot fulfil the responsibilities of a church member, and would therefore

prefer not to be one ;” a third, “ there are so many churches all claiming to be right, I don’t know which to choose ;” while a fourth would say, “ I can live religiously out of the church, just as well as a great many do who belong to it.” Such, with many more similar ones, would be the reasons given.

Now, I regard all these pretended reasons as mere frivolities ; they are only masks to hide the true cause from sight. No doubt the parties are sincere when they offer them ; but they are *self-deceived*. Their excuses conceal, even from their own eyes, the actual cause of their refusal to join the church.

What is that cause ? I answer, it is an unwillingness to submit to the yoke of Christ. Various things may be the occasions of this unwillingness ; such as the fear of opposition ; the unpopularity of the church ; or a dread of church restraints and the like, but the root of the difficulty is in a heart that shrinks from wearing the yoke of Christ.

How can it be otherwise ? Let the convert abandon his own will, and inquire what is the will of Christ, and the case is settled. Why did Christ es-

tablish a church on earth ? Why has he dignified it with the title of “ his body ? ” Why is it called the “ church of God ? ” Why said, that “ Christ loved the church ? ” Do not these names and titles of endearment show the church to be of God ? And is not the establishment of a church on earth a sufficient declaration of his will concerning his followers ?

I have seen, in many places along the sea coast of our country, little houses erected close to the shore. They stand at considerable distances from the inhabitants, and in the places where, in the hour of storm, the stranded vessel is most likely to come ashore. Now, when the half-drowned sailor crawls up the beach and discovers one of these houses, provided with wood, matches and other materials for the comfort of the destitute, does he hesitate to enter ? Does he not understand the existence of these humane houses to be an expression of the will and opinion of the community who placed them there ? He does ; and to him they speak a voiceless, but intelligible language. They say : “ The people, anticipat-

ing your danger and understanding your necessity, if cast ashore, have built these for your use and help." And, accordingly, he thankfully accepts their shelter.

In like manner does the *divine* origin of the church speak the will of God. The church thus originated, says: "God, your Savior, knew it was necessary for your edification, that you should be joined to your brethren in Christ, by visible bonds." He, therefore, who despises this provision for his salvation, despises the wisdom of God. He says, "I know best. True, the will of God is plain; but I prefer my own way." Is it wonderful that such persons wander away to destruction?

But God's will is still more directly expressed, by the disposition he made of the first converts to His gospel. "*The Lord added unto the church, such as should be saved.*" Upon this passage the amiable Merritt says: "Here observe, that *the Lord* added the converts to the church. Hence it was his will, that they should belong to the church." *

* Timothy Merritt's "Convert's Guide."

Will *you* then, young Christian, run the fearful risk of losing your soul by not submitting yourself *entirely* to the will of Jesus? Have you done some things, and can you be willing to leave the others undone? Have you been led to the cross by the guiding hand of the church, and will you spurn her now? Will you haughtily stand aside and say, "I will not mingle with the children?" The church has travailed in birth for you, and nursed you—will you abandon your spiritual mother? The church is God's visible host making open war with the enemies of Christ—will you refuse to join her ranks? The church is the family of God on earth; Jehovah is Father to its members, Christ their elder brother. the noblest hearts, the loftiest spirits of mankind, have felt honored to be joined to this holy household. Will *you* stand apart? Is it nothing to be one of the family that claims Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Deborah, Susannah, Paul, John, Peter, Polycarp, Augustine, Luther, Cranmer, Wesley, Whitefield, Payson, Asbury, and hosts of such glorious spiritual heroes and heroines, for its members? A

family, which, even now, contains within its various branches nearly all the moral beauty, the worth, the excellency of our common nature? From this family of God, will *you*, lamb of Jesus, stand aloof? O, as you value your soul, do not be so unpardonably foolish! It will be a "fight" to reach heaven in the church; out of it, it will be almost a certain forfeiture of your glowing hopes. Therefore, I say again to thee, young convert, *join the church and join it directly.*

The lukewarm professor will tell you to wait awhile. Satan will whisper the same exhortation to delay. "Prove yourself; see if you hold out first; put your new experience to the test a little longer: then join the church;" will be the syren song the Tempter will sing in your heart.

Heed not that song as you desire to persevere. Should the young lamb prefer the snow-bank in the chilly month of March, to the warm fold of the Shepherd? Would that be the way to insure its own existence? True, *if it lived* on the snow bank, it would in the fold; but the probability is, it would die

there. So if you maintain your piety out of the church, for a given period, you may be likely to retain it in her bosom ; but you run a fearful risk. Your piety in its infant state, needs all the nourishment, sympathy and restraint, that can be brought to its maintenance. If there is any benefit in a church relation, you need to enjoy it, in the beginning of your experience. Hasten then, my dear friend, without a moment's delay, to your pastor, class-leader or deacon, and place yourself in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having once joined the church, you must set a high estimate on your church relation. Value it very highly. Guard your heart against that spirit of opposition to the church of God, which is so rife in the land. Do not listen to reproaches against her. Never utter a word in her disfavor. When the acknowledged faults of church members are discussed, look on the other side. If the church has faults, she has virtues also, great virtues. Her influence is blessed as a whole. Whatever of moral activity and energy there is in the various moral organizations of

the age, is derived from the church. The *wise* and *prudent* laborers in all the popular reforms of the day received their impulses and their light through the church. She is like those little springs in the mountains, which, unperceived steal down their rocky beds and mingling together, form brooks and mighty rivers. Men are apt to forget, as they stand amazed at the magnificence of the great Mississippi, that those flowing waters owe their being to the quiet springs in the far distant hills. So do they forget the quiet, but effectual moral influence, which, perpetually flowing out from the church, gives existence and support to the more noisy and imposing movements of the age.

You must remember this. The church is "*the pillar and ground of the truth.*" A relation to her is not to be lightly abandoned. Make your mind up, young Christian, both to live and die in the church. Some professors are constantly threatening to leave the church. Every trifle which happens to impede their footsteps becomes an occasion for saying, "We will leave the church." This is a bad spirit, and

aside from the injury it inflicts on the parties themselves, it effectually destroys their influence over others.

Be *whole-hearted* in your attachment to the church. Enter into all her plans of benevolence. Make her objects yours. Resolve to make your connection a benefit to her. Contribute, according to your ability, to her maintenance. If you are poor, do something. Many young people, who have spent dollars annually for sinful pleasure, before their conversion, think themselves unable to contribute anything to the church. They will receive all the benefit of church arrangements, and leave others to pay the bills. They never stop to inquire who supports the pastor, or warms and lights the house. This is morally wrong. It is unjust to their brethren. You must not be guilty of such meanness, but, according to the ability which God hath given you, claim your right and privilege to sustain the institutions of Christ.

You may possibly have some questionings in your mind concerning which branch of the church you

had better join. If so, I will give you a principle or two by which to decide safely.

Usually it is best for converts to join that church, where they have been led to Christ. There is a propriety in this step too obvious not to be perceived. There must be a mutual attachment, a reciprocity of feeling between the converts and the instruments of their salvation, which can exist between no others. Accordingly it is found by actual experience, that those, who after being converted in one church join another, are like flowers transplanted at the wrong season : they witheraway and die. Perhaps the reason of this is, that the motive for such a choice is generally wrong. It is to please sectarian relations ; to avoid the odium of a poor or unpopular church, to gain social influence ; or some other sinister purpose. No wonder such converts soon become apostates. With you, my dear reader, let the question be : "Where can I enjoy the best helps in the way of salvation, and be in the most useful sphere of action." This decided, join that church and set your face like a flint against all sinister motives.

But it may be, the *creed* of the church where you were converted is in opposition to your convictions of what is the truth. Then go somewhere else. To adopt and profess articles of faith which we do not believe, is hypocrisy and falsehood. A conscientious believer in Calvinism could not therefore consistently join a Methodist church ; neither could a man, believing the doctrines of Methodism, consistently unite with a church which professed the dogmas of Calvin. There would be a palpable falsity of conduct in either case, which would certainly mar the happiness of a reflecting mind.

Go then, dear young convert, to that branch of the church whose sentiments are congenial with your own ! Where you have been most blessed and can be the most useful. Be not turned aside from consistency, and an aim to glorify God by any influence whatever. Be a firm, devoted member of the church militant ; then, in all probability, you will work out your salvation, and in due season be admitted to the church triumphant in heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS HABITS.



N action constantly repeated becomes a habit. A habit once formed is not easily laid aside. Those things which are exceedingly difficult at first, become easy when habitually practised.

A young lady was once playing a most difficult piece of music in the presence of her teacher. Her fingers touched the keys of the piano with wonderful rapidity and precision, yet, during its performance, she was much agitated. When she concluded, she burst into tears !

The cause of her agitation and tears was not the character of the music she was playing, for she had been watching the dying struggles of a favorite cana-

ry whose cage hung over her piano. The little songster dropped dead just as she finished her performance. Her attention had been wholly absorbed in the agonies of the bird, and the precision with which she had executed that very difficult piece of music was wholly the result of habit.*

Our habits control us, as rods of iron. Bad habits are broken off, only, with great difficulty. Sometimes the habits of early life are never entirely overcome. They tyrannize over their victims with unrelenting severity and unyielding perseverance. Hence, when the convert to the faith of the gospel is under the first vigorous impulses of the gracious principle, he should be careful to form the best religious habits possible to his circumstances. The first year of a convert's life usually determines his character through his whole subsequent career. How careful, then, should *you* be, dear reader, to begin aright! Your usefulness; your happiness. yea, even your salvation, depend upon such a proper beginning.

* See Abercrombie on the Intellectual Powers.

Let me give you a specimen of two classes of religious professors. Philip is a young man, a Christian of some seven years standing. When he rises in the morning, which he never fails to do at a given hour, he invariably, and without haste, turns to the word of God. After reading a short passage, Philip calmly drops upon his knees and spends perhaps fifteen minutes in serious, earnest prayer to his Heavenly Father. He is careful to pray with a *recollected* mind, he fails not to exercise an appropriating faith.

At noon, the young Christian is in his closet again. The well thumbed bible is opened with a disposition of heart, which says: "*I will hear what God the Lord will speak.*" Rarely does he open the sacred book in vain. The word refreshes him. The throne of grace is again approached. The blessings of the morning are gratefully acknowledged, and grace for the afternoon entreated. At a regular hour, Philip retires to his chamber at night, and with deliberation pours out his soul to God.

These are the secret habits of young Philip. He

began them with his conversion. He resolved to maintain them sacredly. Those seasons for prayer are, with him, consecrated moments, which he has no right to take from God. Like that *young man eloquent*, the sainted Summerfield, he considers himself pre-engaged at those hours, and therefore permits nothing to interfere, or hinder him. Every thing else, he compels to give way to the claims of his spiritual time. To do this cost him many struggles at first, but, now, it is comparatively easy. His mind turns habitually toward the closet at the appointed hours. The consequence is, that Philip is an exemplary Christian.

Now let us examine a specimen of another and an opposite class of religionists. Peter is also a young man. He was converted at the same time and under the same circumstances with Philip. They stood together at the same font for baptism; they joined the church in company; they are situated nearly alike in their social condition and employment. But here, I regret to say, the resemblance ends.

Peter has no regular hour for rising in the morn-

ing. Consequently he is seldom up before the time for going to his business. He dresses in a hurry. Instead of looking into the Holy Scriptures for a word of counsel, and taking time to plead with God, he merely drops upon his knees and hastily mutters a few thoughtless sentences. He then proceeds either to his store or to the breakfast table. Business matters next occupy his thoughts, to the exclusion of all devotional feeling. Night arrives. He has no relish for communion with God. Possibly, he may go through the *forms* of secret worship, ere he seeks his couch, but that is all. Pray earnestly he certainly does not; and as he sinks away to slumber, there is a cloud settling heavily upon his conscience. This is, if I except some occasional struggles, few, feeble and far between, after a better experience, a true picture of Peter's devotional habits. As may be anticipated, Peter is a very inconsistent, a decidedly useless man to the church.

What has made the difference between Philip and Peter? It is chiefly in this. Philip began at his conversion to act by rule; Peter followed his im-

pulses. Philip's adhesion to rules has led to the formation of right and blessed habits. His life and experience move with the uniformity of machinery. Peter, depending on impulses, formed wrong habits, and his life is fast ebbing away without satisfaction to himself or benefit to the world.

You must, my reader, be either a Philip or a Peter. Habits you *must* have, either good or bad. This is unavoidable. Our daily actions inevitably lead to habits; and these habits too often seal our destiny in both worlds.

To which class of professors, young disciple, do you desire to belong? Make your deliberate and prayerful selection. Choose to be a Philip. Rely upon God; for power to execute your choice, and begin from this hour to fulfil your purpose. Make out your plan, and henceforth abide by it with invincible determination.

The secret of maintaining a good habit lies in the avoidance of its first violation. For example; you have resolved to spend fifteen minutes in your morning devotions. You arrange your time for rising, in

agreement with that plan and the claims of your daily avocation. On a particular day, however, you are going a journey, or you oversleep yourself. The first solicitation of your heart will be to omit, or at least to shorten the time of your devotions. That is one of the *important* moments of your life. Your adversary will make that place a battle ground for your soul. Yield, violate your habit once, and most likely you will do it again. Better go fasting to your business ; better proclaim your lengthened slumber to the world, than neglect your God and violate a habit which is essential to your salvation.

Begin therefore, young Christian, a habit of praying three times each day in secret, before your God. Like the man after God's own heart, record the vow : "*Evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud : and He shall hear my voice.*"

To this habit of regular closet devotion you must add a habit of breathing out your desires to God continually. Let it be written on your character, "*I give myself unto prayer.*" Let every incident of life be as the round of a ladder whose top

reaches to heaven. If unpleasant, let it prompt a prayer for strength and patience ; if pleasant, an expression of gratitude. This " will make every action of your life holy. You will see nothing, hear nothing, without its raising your heart to God." Every act and thought will thus become a sacrifice to God. O ! how inexpressibly blessed is that man who lives in such a holy habit of prayer.

But, let it be remembered, that, in order to enjoy any benefit from this habit, *prayer* must be PRAYER ! I mean, that a habit of offering *lip* service to God will be of no advantage. Prayer is a serious and solemn duty. It is the poor, guilty creature entering the presence chamber of the august and holy Creator, to give utterance to his wants and wishes. It should, therefore, be engaged in, earnestly and sincerely : properly, according to the directions of the word of God.

Such prayer is always powerful. It prevails with God. What did He say who dwelt in the bosom of the Father ? He who is the *Faithful Witness* ? Hear his testimony and be satisfied ! "*Whatsoever*

ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet: and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Enough, O Blessed Jesus! This is thy testimony, it cannot fail. *Whatsoever* the young convert asks shall be given him.

History informs us that Queen Elizabeth gave the Earl of Essex a ring, with this promise. "Into whatever disgrace you may fall, whatever prejudices I may entertain against you, if you will send me this ring I will give you a patient hearing and will lend a favorable ear to your prayer." Let us now suppose the Earl of Essex in trouble, and imagine a number of circumstances, which, notwithstanding this promise, might render his prayer inoperative.

First; he might send a prayer for her favor and not send her the ring. Secondly; he might send the ring and plead his own excellencies and not her promise. Thirdly; he might *demand* her favor in a peremptory manner. Fourthly; he might solicit a

favor which would be injurious to her honor as a queen to bestow. Fifthly; he might write a rambling petition, containing no definite request. Sixthly; he might ask for suitable favors, and yet tell her he did not expect to get them. Or finally; he might ask for what would prove his own destruction, if given.

Here then are seven ways in which a petition might be offered and denied, without any violation of the Queen's promise.

It is so with prayer. "*Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss,*" writes the holy apostle. If then you, young convert, desire to offer acceptable prayer, you must pray properly.

1. You must plead the blood of Jesus. "*Whatsoever ye ask in my name,*" said Christ, "*that will I do.*" 2. You must not rely in any sense upon your own merits, for you, with all the world, are "*guilty before God.*" 3. You must pray with deep humility, both of spirit and manner. "*I dwell with him that is of a humble and contrite spirit.*" 4. You must ask such things as will glorify God. Not for things which would merely please yourself. Jesus prom-

ised to answer prayer, "*That the Father might be glorified in the Son.*" 5. You must be *definite* in stating your desires. An unmeaning petition is no prayer at all. 6. You must ask in faith. "*Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*" 7. You must pray with submission to the will of God. Let him be judge of what is best. You might ask for gold, and God might see that poverty would be better for you than gold. And so of a thousand things you might desire. They would destroy you. God does not therefore violate, but keep his promise when he withholds such things.

Within these limits you will always find the blessed effects of habitual prayer. You will need no higher proof than your own consciousness of the *power* of prayer ; for you will be able to say with the pious John Newton at the time of his conversion, " About this time I began to *know* that there is a God, who hears and answers prayer." *

* Quoted in Hamilton's Mount of Olives.

There was once a man in a large English town, a tailor, who made a very decided profession of religion. Among other things, he established a family altar. Some of his former friends, with the usual acrimony of the carnal heart, began a series of persecutions against him. Among other things, they prepared a temptation for him, founded on his new habit of family devotion.

Having ascertained his hour for morning prayer, they sent a gentleman to his store. "Where is your master?" he inquired of the boy.

"At breakfast, Sir."

"Go tell him to come instantly. I wish to be measured for two suits of clothes!"

The boy proceeded to the breakfast room at the back of the store, and delivered the message, just as the pious tailor was opening his bible to read.

"Tell the gentleman we are engaged in our family devotions, and I will wait upon him in a few minutes;" was his reply.

The lad returned with this answer to the gentleman; who, affecting great rage, said: "Go tell your

master, if he does not come *directly*, I will go somewhere else."

To this message the tailor sent the following reply. "I am sorry, but I must wait on God first. When I have served Him I will come into the shop and serve you."

The customer went away, but the wicked persecutors were confounded. The pious tailor showed himself to be a Christian indeed.

I have introduced this incident to impress upon you, if you are the head of a family, the importance of a *habit of family prayer*. Not only would I advise you to pray morning and evening with your family, but to do it steadily. Like this tailor, let nothing hinder you from its performance. No, not *once*. Had he yielded at that time, it is more than probable, he would have done so again; and, very likely, have ceased altogether. The only way to maintain a family altar is to keep it inviolate. In respect to its habitual neglect, by some professors, I have only to bid you remember that God says: "*I*

will pour out my fury upon the families that call not on my name."

Thompson in his well known poem, "The Castle of Indolence," has this beautiful and striking passage :

A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye :
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flashing round a summer sky :
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly,
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hover'd nigh ;
But whatever smack'd of 'noyance or unrest,
Was far, far off expell'd from this delicious nest.

Such is his description of the castle occupied by the wizard Indolence. How true is this to the actual inward life of millions ! It is too true of very many who claim the Christian character. Their *minds* know no labor. They submit passively to external influences. As passing objects sketch their outlines upon the camera obscura, so do the scenes of life upon their intellects. They do not *think*.

At the close of a day they could not relate their thoughts, and for the best of reasons, they have had none. The day has passed as in a waking dream.

This mental dreaminess is the result of *habit*. The habit is injurious to intellectual and spiritual growth. If *you* would be a prosperous Christian, you must avoid it.

Fix therefore upon a topic of thought every morning. Take some scripture doctrine, precept or promise for a subject. Turn it over in your mind. View it in every aspect. Study its relations to other truths. Mingle your reflections with prayer. If your mind wanders, call it back. Labor most strenuously to control it. Do this every day, until habit renders it easy. By this means, you will retain a spiritual freshness and an intellectual fervor, which will ensure at once your growth in grace and in usefulness.

It is Sabbath morning. The people are flocking to the house of God. The old patriarch leaning on his staff; the stout youth vigorous and elastic in his movements; the widow with her oppressed heart,

and the bride with her smile of undissembled bliss are together crowding the path which leads to the temple of Jehovah.

They enter and take their seats. The bell ceases. The pastor rises to open the solemn services. His eye rests on a vacant seat. He directs a look of inquiry. Others too, gaze on that empty seat. There is an evident feeling of wonder why it is vacant.

The meeting closes. "Where is Father ——?" is the universal question.

"He must be sick;" is the universal answer.

The reason of this mutual agreement is, that the venerable man whose seat is vacant, has been uniform in his attendance at meeting for many years. Every Sabbath, in sunshine and in storm, his seat has been occupied. His absence, therefore, excites astonishment, and leads to the inference that he is sick.

Another man of similar age is also absent from the same church. His absence causes no remark. Why not? He is an irregular attendant. A slight storm, a hot sun, or a frivolous excuse is sufficient to

detain him at home. *His presence* is always noticed ; his absence always unremarked.

The difference in these two men is the result of habit. The first began his Christian life with a stern resolution to be a consistent hearer ; the second meant to be, but he let trifles affect him and thus fell into irregular habits.

Nor is it a matter of trifling importance, which of these habits is adopted by you, my dear reader. There never was a person of exalted piety, who was irregular in attendance on the public means of grace. A habit of irregularity will most assuredly lead to spiritual leanness. The Christian who stays at home, does not serve God there. He either lolls away the hours in his easy chair or reads some idle reading. Devotional he is not. The bible is not suited to the taste of Sabbath loiterers. Spending one portion of the day at home, unfits him to enjoy the remainder. Hence, the Sabbath does not witness his religious growth. He does not understand the meaning of the poet, who sung,

“Oft in his house, his glory shines,
Before our wondering eyes :
We wish not then for golden mines,
Or aught beneath the skies.”

But it may rather be said of such :

“To use the means of grace, how loth !
We call them still in vain ;
They yield to their beloved sloth,
And fold their arms again.”

To this habit of irregularity is inseparably joined a loss of personal influence. He, who is frequently absent from the church and the social meeting, exerts little or no influence over his fellow Christians. Even Charity herself will be compelled to doubt his piety. Sinners will not respect him as a Christian, whatever they may feel towards him as a man.

Let me entreat you then, young convert, to form a habit of punctuality and regularity. Begin at once to be known as a constant hearer, do not wander from church to church. Do not miss one sermon. Do not lose one prayer meeting, if it is possi-

ble for you to be present. Form right habits on this subject. One meeting omitted, may be a serious loss to your soul. God may have given your pastor just such a subject as your peculiar wants demanded. Your being absent, that once, may cause you to lose the blessing in store for you : it may also lead you astray. Had *Thomas* been present at the first meeting of the disciples, he would not have fallen into the sins of presumption and unbelief, as he did. Do then, young disciple, as you dread spiritual leanness, as you fear a loss of personal influence, as you dread to wander from God, do, I beg you in Christ's stead, become an habitual attendant on the house of God. Go, in all weather, under every possible circumstance, go to the house of prayer.

There is one more habit I wish to urge upon you before I close this chapter. You should accustom yourself to devote certain portions of your time to reading and study. To do this, you must spend some evenings at home. Many Christians in our cities, spend every evening in the week at meetings

of some kind or other. This is unadvisable, except perhaps in seasons of powerful revival. Two or three evenings a week are sufficient in ordinary times, for attendance on social meetings. The remainder should be sedulously employed in reading the scriptures, in examining works of history or science, in studying the character of holy men and women as recorded in their biographies. This habit will enlarge your sphere of thought ; it will give you a commanding influence in society ; it will save you from mental dissipation, and from, what is worse, a habit of wasting your evenings in idle conversation with religious idlers and backslidden professors, of whom there are but too many in every branch of the church of Christ.

Many other pious habits will suggest themselves to your mind. Many bad ones will be visible in the lives of your companions. Rigidly observe the former. With the most stubborn energy resist the latter. O ! Beware of bad religious habits. While writing this book, I cast my eye one morning upon

the window seat. In the corner I perceived a tiny spider, one of the smallest species. He had woven a web so fine, I could not perceive the threads which composed it. Yet in that slender web a large fly was enfolded. The fine thread had been passed round his wings. His struggles were hard and incessant, yet he could not escape. And every few moments, his little foe descended to survey him and if necessary to pass another ligature around him. Such are bad habits. However small and trifling they appear, they weave strong cords around their victim. Every struggle for freedom is followed by another bond, until the poor unhappy creature is led captive by the devil at his will. Beware then, dear young convert, of bad religious habits. Beware of sloth, the great adversary of good habits, or it may be said of you as of Pollock's candidate for fame, who


“Saw in the very threshold of pursuit,
A thousand obstacles ; he halted first
And while he halted, saw his burning hopes
Grow dim and dimmer still. * *

His purposes, made daily, daily broken,
Like plants uprooted oft, and set again,
More sickly grew, and daily wavered more,
Till at the last * *
Sleep gathered fast, and weighed him downward still.”*

* Course of Time, book 6.

CHAPTER X.

ON EVIL COMPANY.

HEN the prudent mariner sees the masts of a wrecked vessel peering up above the surface of the waters, he heaves a sigh to the memory of the perished ones, and bears away, lest his own bark should strand upon the same sand bar. He sees his own danger in the half buried wreck ; and he avoids it.

Happy would it be for multitudes, who set sail for Heaven, if they were equally wise. If the example of thousands who have made shipwreck of their faith, on the fatal quicksand of wicked companionship, had its appropriate influence, every new convert to Jesus Christ would henceforth utterly forsake

all unnecessary association with ungodly persons. Probably two of every three backsliders are made so by the society of ungodly associates. Well, therefore, has the sensible author of "Proverbial Philosophy" * said, concerning the wicked :

"Nevertheless for these my counsel is, Avoid them if thou canst,
For the finer edges of thy virtues will be dulled by attrition with their
vice.

And there is an enemy within thee ; either to palliate their sin,
Until, for surface-sweetness thou too art drawn adown the vortex ;
Or, even unto fatal pride, to glorify thy purity by contrast "

And again, he appropriately says :

"Many are the dangers and temptations compassing a bad man's presence :
The upas hath a poisonous shade, and who would slumber there ?
Wherefore, avoid them if thou canst ; only, under providence and duty,
If thy lot be cast with Kedar, patiently and silently live to their rebuke."

What is evil company ? Does it include more than the immoral and the profane ? I think so. To the young Christian, any companionship is evil which has a tendency to draw him away from Christ. The moral, the intelligent, the refined, the fashionable, if they love not the Lord Jesus Christ, are not fit to

* Martin Farquhar Tupper, Esq.

be the chosen companions of the child of God. However agreeable their society, however amusing and attractive their conversation, they must be forsaken.

Of course the convert will understand these remarks to refer to those friendships, which he has been accustomed to form beyond the family circle. His relatives are not to be abandoned. Whatever their religious character may be, while they do not bind his conscience, he must remain; faithfully perform his duties toward them, and labor earnestly for their conversion. But all voluntary intimacies with ungodly persons, must be strictly avoided.

Let us learn the importance of this duty by studying a sketch, pencilled from real life.

There is Madeleine, bowing her knee in humble prayer. Her penitence is deep and sincere. She rises from her knees with a countenance so calm, that her acceptance with God is almost visible to the spectators. She speaks: "Now I know that my Redeemer liveth. My soul has found rest in the arms of my great High Priest."

It is a lovely spectacle to behold Madeleine in the

simplicity and zeal of her "first love." Her features wear an aspect of heavenly confidence : her voice declares the goodness of her Savior to all her friends ; her feet run to carry the tidings of her salvation to all her former acquaintances. Zeal, affection, devotion, praise, prayer, are the elements of her new spiritual life. The church looks upon her with delight, the world gazes at her with astonishment. Madeleine is "*shewing forth the praises of him, who hath called her out of darkness into his marvellous light.*" Happy Madeleine ! May you ever remain the affectionate and faithful disciple.

One afternoon this young convert finds a polite note on her table, inviting her to a social party. It has come from some former associates, for whose conversion she has thus far labored in vain. Since her religious life began, Madeleine has avoided them except for the purpose of strictly religious conversation. This invitation is an effort of her friends to renew former intimacies. "What shall I do?" she asks herself. The question is important. How will she decide ?

Her better judgment bids her decline ; her *inclination* suggests that she had better accept. A brief conflict ensues. Inclination triumphs. "I must not be too strict or they will think unfavorably of religion ;" is her inward thought. She prepares to go to the party.

Madeleine is at the house of her friend. Former associates gather round her with many kind words of welcome. She is pleased, flattered, and inwardly condemns herself for having been so distant toward such kind acquaintances.

As the conversation proceeds, the question of religion is introduced. Madeleine speaks strongly in favor of a life of piety. One of the party replies with severe irony. The rest laugh heartily at the jest. Madeleine is rebuked and silenced.

What will she do ? Her duty is to renew her defence of religion with meekness and decision. If again repulsed, to seize the first moment to retire. Does she do this ? Alas ! She condemns herself for having gone too far. She resolves to repair the fancied indiscretion ; with a strong effort, she rallies

her conversational powers, enters into the spirit of the party, and before she retires becomes as merry, as jocose, and as trifling as the rest.

Poor Madeleine ! How sad she feels when once alone in her chamber. She is condemned for trifling ; for having permitted the enemies of the cross to drive her into a compliance with their spirit. A cloud hides the mercy seat from her faith. She is very unhappy. With bitter tears, however, she confesses her sin ; records a solemn vow to avoid the society of the scornful in future ; and, before she sleeps, recovers the calmness and peace of the restored disciple.

But this young Christian has taken a first step into evil. The second is difficult to be avoided. Her visit and the spirit of levity she displayed have awakened an expectation among her former companions, that she is about to be a congenial spirit again. Accordingly they pour in upon her during the next few days. Having trifled with them once, she cannot resume the dignified seriousness with which she met them immediately after her conversion. She is

therefore light and gay in her manners. Condemnation of heart is the result. A want of conscious integrity silences her voice in the church. Her zeal languishes ; her love decays ; her devotion dies. Madeleine is a backslider in heart. For a while, she maintains her profession, but at last dissolves the sacred tie and launches forth upon the tide of worldliness and fashion, her faith shipwrecked. Men pass by her and mournfully sing with the poet :

“ I saw a wreck upon the ocean flood.

How sad and desolate ! No man was there ;

No living thing was on it. There it stood ;

Its sails all gone ; its masts were standing bare ;

Tossed in the wide, the boundless, howling sea.

The very sea-birds screamed, and passed it by.

And as I looked, the ocean seemed to be

A sign and figure of eternity.

The wreck an emblem seemed of those, that sail

Without the Pilot Jesus, on its tide.

Thus, thought I, when the final storms prevail,

Shall rope, and sail, and mast be scattered wide ;

And they, with helm and anchor lost, be driven,

In endless exile sad, far from the port of Heaven.” *

* Professor Upham.

Young convert! The case of Madeleine is the history of millions. From the world before the flood, when the sons of God, the worshippers of the Most High, mingled with the daughters of men, or of the wicked, down to the present moment, worldly friendships have been fatal to piety. When the Christian voluntarily enters a convivial party of worldlings, like Madeleine, he will find them unwilling to have their sociality marred by the solemn topics of eternity and death. If the Christian insist upon his right to discourse salvation, their mutual intercourse will soon be ended. The unregenerate will not invite such a disciple to their companies. They never solicit the presence of a Christian among them, only on the presumption, that he will accommodate himself to their spirit and feelings. And that disciple, who seeks the social circle of the irreligious, *must* yield his right and duty to speak of Christ. He *must* imbibe the spirit of his associates. He can no more escape the contagion of their worldly spirit, than he can avoid being influenced by an atmosphere infected with a deadly malaria. Let him be brought

under their influence, he will soon cease to be spiritual. Ceasing to be spiritual his enjoyment will depart and he become, like Madeleine, a poor unhappy backslider.

I beg the young convert not to despise these warnings. The salvation of the soul is so precious, that any hinderance to its attainment should be carefully and earnestly avoided. Any caution, or word of warning should awaken fear. The first roar of the breakers is sufficient to alarm the wary mariner; the least intimation of a defile will rouse the caution of the prudent soldier. And shall not these plain statements of the extreme danger of worldly associations lead the young Christian to be on his guard? Will he rush into a yawning gulf with his eyes open? Will he hazard the eternal bliss of heaven for the sake of the worldling's friendship? No! Surely it cannot be. The convert will be warned. Now that the snare is revealed, he will surely be as wise as the bird of whom Solomon said: "*In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.*"

But, lest the reader should say these statements

are merely the opinions of the writer, and, yielding to an already captivated inclination, resolve to attempt the fatal experiment of retaining both worldly friendship and the Christian character, I will exhibit the *wisdom*, the wishes and the authority of Jehovah. If he make any justifiable pretensions to Christian discipleship, that authority must be decisive on his subsequent action.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

Here is the wisdom of God. *He* who knows the power of evil influence over the godly man, here attempts to lure him from the society of the “*ungodly*,” the “*sinner*,” and the “*scornful*,” by the promise of a blessing. Why has He done this, if there is no danger in such associations? And mark it, my dear reader, it is not from the companionship of the blasphemer, the profane person, the murderer merely, that you are enticed, but from the “*ungodly*”—from those who, whatever may be their intellectual

attractions, are not in possession of the image of God. Now listen to the *commandment* of your Heavenly Father.

“*Enter not in the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. AVOID IT! PASS NOT BY IT, TURN FROM IT AND PASS AWAY.*”

Christian reader! Do you acknowledge the authority of the Bible? Then is the question settled. You *dare* not associate with the wicked! You *dare* not choose them for friends and companions. God has forbidden it, in the most absolute manner. The text just quoted unquestionably prohibits such friendships.

God has also taught the *danger* of such worldly fellowship. “*Evil communications corrupt good manners.*” “*The friendship of the world is enmity with God.*” These are plain, unqualified statements. To choose ungodly companions is to abandon the Lord!

That no room for hesitation should remain, God has added threats to the list of motives. “*A companion of fools shall be destroyed.*” “Yes, DESTROY-

ED! Why so? Plainly because such a companion will seduce him into sin. He cannot walk in the way of life and be companion with one who walks the way of death. The thing is impossible. He will cross the line; and both, after travelling the road together, will go in at the gates of death and be *companions in Hell*.

Speaking of the Christian in worldly company, the lamented and eloquent Chalmers says: "All the feeling, and all the fancy which circulate there, may be in perfect unison with those best sympathies, which go to cement and to sweeten the intercourse of human society; and yet the whole breath of this fair society on earth may be utterly distinct from the breath of the society in Heaven. In the very proportion of its freedom from that which would alarm and repel a sensitive delicacy, may it in truth be the more pregnant with danger to the souls of the unwary. It may only engage them the more to the things that are beneath, and alienate them the more from the things that are above. And thus it is a very possible thing, that in simply prosecuting

your round of invitations among this world's amiable friends and hospitable families, you may be cradling the soul into utter insensibility against the portentous realities of another world — a spiritual lethargy may grow and gather every year till it settles down into the irrevocable sleep of death — and without one specific transgression that can be alledged of the companies among which you move, still may you be inhaling in the midst of them an atmosphere that makes you as oblivious of eternity, as if you had drunk of the water of forgetfulness. It may not be the air of vulgar profligacy or abandoned licentiousness, but it may be still the air of irreligion. And you, assimilating more and more to the temperament by which you are surrounded, *in confirmed irreligion may expire!*”*

“But how shall I act toward those of my relatives and business associates who are irreligious? Must I forsake them?” No! That is both impossible and inexpedient. You must move among them as a Christian. You must walk and act among them, but

* Sermon on Amusements and Companies of the World.

not be of them. You must, by your devotional spirit, create an atmosphere around you which will defend you from their influence and enable you to exert a saving power over them. You must resemble that little insect, known to naturalists, “ which can gather round it a sufficiency of atmospheric air — and so clothed upon, descends into the bottom of the pool, and you may see the little diver moving about at his ease, protected by his crystal vesture, though the water all around and above be stagnant and bitter.” * So by maintaining a high degree of spirituality, you may clothe yourself with a vestment, which will protect you from all harm in those contaminating spheres of action, where you are compelled by the Providence of God to live and act.

You will, however, need a few bosom friends. The wants of your nature demand social pleasures. You must look for such friends among the people of God. In the church of which you are or will be a member, you will undoubtedly be able to find those whose friendship will be a blessing to you. But

* Hamilton's Mount of Olives.

even here, care is needed. Not every member of a church is a safe friend. Remember the tares grow with the wheat. The gospel net contains fishes both good and bad. Choose, therefore, with caution. Let decided piety be the primary qualification in your companions. Next to this, congeniality of tastes and pursuits may be sought after. These found, you may have both pleasure and safety in their acquaintance, and learn by experience the truth of that Proverb which says, "*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.*"


And now permit me, young Christian, to ask what is your decision? Convinced you must be of the truth. The path of duty is plainly before you. Will you faithfully walk therein? Be assured, it is no light matter! Lot was attracted by the beautiful vale of Sodom, to dwell among the wicked inhabitants of that devoted city. And costly was the price he paid for mingling with that sin-accursed people. His sons and his wife perished in their tremendous overthrow. Sampson was charmed by the beauty of the Philistine women, and the gayety of the Philistine

people. His mighty strength, his liberty, and finally his life was the price he paid for gratifying his desires. Solomon well nigh lost his soul, and Rehoboam forfeited the greater part of his kingdom through ungodly friendships. And the first instance of benefit to a disciple of Christ from such associations has yet to be written on the records of the church of Christ!

And will *you* — *can* you trifle with so momentous a subject? You desire to wear the crown of life. Well! The desire is worthy of you. The object is a glorious one. It is worth sacrifices. Make them. Give up worldly friendship for the sake of Heaven. The exchange will be infinitely profitable. Then make it. Crush your inclinations! Chain your affections! Bind yourself to Christ, with the cords of love. Make friendships, and every thing in life subservient to his glory and your own eternal felicity, and then you will be honored with the smile of that *“friend, who sticketh closer than a brother.”*

CHAPTER XI.

ON MARRIAGE.

 HE consequences of one important misstep in life often follow a man to the grave. Eli permitted his sons to get a victory over him in their boyhood, and they became a source of trouble to him to his latest moment. Napoleon sent his armies into Spain and never knew prosperity afterwards. But for that great mistake, he had probably died Emperor of France. He was firmly seated on his throne, allied by marriage to the House of Austria, and feared by all Europe. But then, his ambitious spirit conceived the project of making his imbecile brothers kings. Spain was to be subdued in pursuance of this design. He sent his veterans into the

Spanish Peninsula. The bugles of that invading army roused all Europe. It did not repose again until the proud king-maker saw his eagles fall in the mire and blood of Waterloo.

The same truth appears in the history of every child of affliction. Nearly all, who dwell in the regions of earthly sorrow, can trace their trouble back to some one great mistake in early life. Some fault, which like a deadly poison working in the blood, has insinuated itself into all the subsequent portions of their existence.

Perhaps no one misstep is more common than the ill-assorted marriage. Certainly the hour which witnesses the nuptials of many promising religious converts, closes the history of their Christian experience. They become henceforth lost to the church. Or, if a church relation is retained, and an effort made to live a spiritual life, it is done through much discouragement and with severe struggles. The thorn is in the flesh : the wound it makes is scarcely ever healed

Is marriage, then, unfavorable to piety? By no means. On the contrary, a judicious, scriptural

marriage is highly conducive to religious and social enjoyment. It is of Divine institution, and He who made man has thereby declared the married state to be the best condition of human life; yea, to be necessary to the full realization of social happiness. It must therefore be favorable to the growth of piety.

Why, then, is marriage ever a source of evil? Because it is often contracted in opposition to the will of God. Believers choose unbelieving companions. The children of God marry with the children of the Devil. Christ and Belial are brought together. Is it wonderful that the parties to these impious unions are unhappy? Is it astonishing that those disciples, who trample on the will of God in their marriages, lose his favor, or make bitter work for repentance unto the end of their lives?

LOUISE was a beautiful example of female piety. Educated, refined, yet deeply devoted to her Savior, she adorned her profession with a lustre rarely excelled. Her fellow disciples loved her tenderly. The poor saw her and were glad, for Louise was be-

nevolent. Seldom has the light of piety shone with such brilliancy and purity as it did in the life and actions of this meek, excellent young lady. Never did young Christian give brighter promise of being faithful unto death.

Louise was addressed by a young man of excellent moral character, but without piety. A better and more suitable companion in every other respect could not be desired. He was a counterpart to the amiable youth of whom Jesus said, "*One thing thou lackest.*" He sought Louise's hand in marriage.

The faith of Louise was sorely tried by this proposal. To reject it was to refuse a most advantageous offer. Besides this, she felt a strong attachment toward him. Both interest and affection pleaded. "What shall I do? He is friendly to religion. He is all that could be desired in a bosom companion, only he is not a Christian!"

Thus thought Louise. Still, in her better judgment, she felt convinced that his being unrenewed ought to be an insuperable barrier to their union.

But inclination triumphed. Louise stood at the altar and plighted the irrevocable vow !

Was she happy ? Alas ! already had she been conscious of spiritual declension. Her intercourse with her affianced husband, prior to her marriage, had damped the fervor of her zeal. The silent convictions of her conscience that she was wrong, had weakened her confidence in God. The wedding day cast a further gloom over her spirit. Its festivities were unsanctified by prayer. The bridegroom's spirit—the spirit of the world—reigned lord of the ascendant. They took possession of their new home, but no family altar was reared there—no secret place was consecrated to closet devotion. The bride and the bridegroom were there, but Christ, the bride's Master, was excluded ; or was there only as a secluded guest.

At first the husband of Louise attended the house of God with punctuality ; he shewed no opposition to the great subject of religion. His wife ventured one day to plead the cause of Christ with him. Then the carnal mind was roused. He spoke warmly.

Henceforth the topic of personal piety is to be interdicted. He would not listen to the name of Louise's Master.

Very soon he grew weary of going to the house of God. If his wife ventured to go and leave him at home, he charged her with unkindness, and even threatened to seek amusement away from home. Fearful of the results, Louise abandoned her seat at church.

The next step of the unconverted husband was to urge his wife to visit social parties, concerts and other places of amusement. At first, she resisted, but by degrees yielded. The church was compelled to cut her off as an unworthy member, and none, who now know the gay and fashionable wife, would suspect that she was once the meek, zealous and devoted lover of Jesus.

LUCY, who belonged to the same church, was not so brilliant a light in the first months of her Christian profession as Louise ; but she was truly devoted. Her character was developed by degrees. Every week brought to light excellencies unobserved before.

Her piety deepened as the light of the gospel shone more clearly upon her yielding and submissive heart.

Lucy had a suitor of similar attractions and claims to him who became the husband of Louise. A slight intimacy had existed between them prior to her conversion. When she gave up her sins, she also gave up her suitor. With a firmness worthy of imitation, she said to him, "I am now a follower of Christ. You walk in an opposite path. We cannot be happy together. When you become a Christian, if desirable, our intercourse can be renewed."

The young man, however, shewed no inclination for Christian duties. He plunged deeply into the pleasures of sin, married a gay woman, and died unconverted.

The thoughtless and trifling blamed Lucy for losing so fine an opportunity for a comfortable settlement in life ; some of her fellow-disciples, too, joined in their sentence of condemnation ; but Lucy felt the satisfaction of one who makes a sacrifice for Christ's sake.

She had her reward. A man of acknowledged piety saw her worth and married her. Happiness and piety crowned their union. They walk together in unity of spirit, mutual helpers in the way to Mount Zion.

Louise and Lucy are examples of two classes, many of whom I have seen during my ministerial life. They represent, not merely two individuals, but, two very large classes, the first of which it is to be regretted is constantly increasing in the church of Christ. With their history before him, to which class will the young convert decide to belong? Admitting the certainty of similar consequences in almost every case, will you, dear reader, choose the destiny of Louise? Will you, for the sake of a husband or wife, deliberately forsake your Savior? Better far to remain unmarried through life than to marry an impenitent sinner, who will first lead you from the cross of Christ, and then, after embittering your domestic life, take you with him to an *everlasting abode in hell!*

Look seriously, young Christian, at this serious

question. Strip it of that romantic aspect with which the young imagination delights to cover it! The utterance of that irrevocable vow is the most weighty act of life. It forges a bond which no hand but Death's can break. Think seriously! Will you bind your destiny to that of an impenitent sinner? *You*, an aspirant after heaven, join yourself to an heir of hell! *You*, the possessor of the Spirit of Christ, wed one who is ruled by the spirit of Satan. Is it possible? How can you expect to reach heaven in such company?

Speaking of these unholy unions, that eloquent, apostolic man, William Jay, says, "How unmeet is it while one goes into the presence of God by devotion, for the other to stand without, till this transaction be over! How forceless the petition singly signed, while the voice of love and union cries, "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing they may ask, it shall be done of my heavenly Father!" How strange and unsightly must it be for one of these associates to be seeking the way everlasting, while the other is going the road to

death! How hurtful to divide and separate, where, weak and opposed alone, they need every mutual encouragement and assistance! How appalling to reflect, that the most endearing alliance must be broken up forever at the termination of a life equally short and uncertain!*

Can you then, young Christian, in view of the probable and almost certain consequences of marrying an unconverted person, entertain the idea for a moment? With hundreds before you, who have become castaways upon this fatal rock, will you deliberately dash upon it and shipwreck your faith also. Is heaven so lightly valued, that you are willing to risk its enjoyments for the sake of the companionship of one of its enemies? Do you love Christ so little that you are prepared to prefer the love of a dying fellow creature to His friendship? O dreadful preference! Shameful dishonor done to the Lord of glory! Can you dare to hope that if you become thus guilty, He will acknowledge you when he comes in his glory!

* The Wife's Advocate. Jay's works, vol. 3.

Two mariners are in the same port. Both of them are in the command of a noble ship. They are both about to sail on a long and distant voyage.

From the port there are two channels leading to the ocean. One is deep, wide, pleasant and safe. Rarely has a ship experienced any difficulty in sailing there. The other passage is narrow, shallow, abounding in rocks and sand bars. It is so dangerous that scarcely a vessel has ever passed it in safety. It is marked with wrecks along its entire length.

One of these mariners wisely chooses the safe channel, and his ship, with her white sails filled by a favoring breeze, gaily floats out to sea in safety. The other, in opposition to the warning voice of his friends, in defiance of the almost impassable barriers, attempts the shallow passage. He is soon embarrassed by its irregularities. He has to tack from side to side, makes slow progress; every moment his difficulties increase. He attempts to return, but the channel is too narrow to permit this. Soon he runs upon a shoal. Night comes on. The winds rise; the sea roars; the waves grow tumultuous.

In vain he utters useless regrets and groans forth his foolish sorrows. The angry elements heed not his cries. They know no pity. When the sun rises, the mariner is no more ! His noble ship has gone to pieces upon the rocks. All is lost, through a folly that would not be warned by the voice of experience.

Such is the folly of that young Christian, who, wilfully disregarding the voices of the past, and the living facts within his own sphere of observation, rushes to the hymenial altar with a Christless bride or bridegroom. Is it wonderful that unavailing regrets and bitter experiences fill the hearts of such disciples ? Is it surprising that God troubles them with frowning providences or departs from them altogether ? Yea, is it not most wonderful that *any*, after such unions, maintain the enjoyment of Christ in their hearts ?

Thus far, I have argued this point from the nature of the case and the experiences of others. Now I propose to bring you the testimony of Holy Writ.

To this you MUST submit yourself, or totally abandon your hopes of Eternal Life.

“ *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* ”

This is the Lord's question. It commends itself to our common sense, even in the case of ordinary companionships. Agreement in spirit and character is necessary to a common friendship. How much more in the strict intimacy of the marriage bond! How can the carnal mind and the mind of Christ mingle? Such opposite principles brought into fellowship can but produce perpetual differences. Do you choose a marriage with such an inevitable issue? Or do you intend to sell your religious principles for the poor compensation of a God-accursed union?

To the Jewish church God said, “ NEITHER SHALT THOU MAKE MARRIAGES WITH THEM.” This prohibition, you see, is peremptory. True, it related to intermarriage with *heathen* families. But where is the difference between the sinner of the Christian community, and the heathen in the Jewish neighborhood? In respect to knowledge, the difference is great. But wherein do their *hearts* differ? The

heathen rejected the service of Jehovah, his heart hated God; the modern sinner does the same, and with far less excuse. He knows better; he violates his conscience; he is God's most deliberate enemy. Do not the same reasons, therefore, exist for avoiding the intimate associations of the marriage relation in this case as in that of the Jew and the heathen?

God assigned a particular reason, aside from the personal influence of such marriages, for their absolute prohibition. He said, "THEY (the heathen) WILL TURN AWAY THY SON FROM FOLLOWING ME."

Is not this reason also applicable to the Christian and the sinner? When, in the Providence of God, the parties to such unscriptural unions become parents, how sad their influence upon their offspring! What avails it, if the religious parent teach the children to pray, to read the Holy Bible, to walk in the Way of Life? will not the example of the unconverted parent lead them to reply as did a boy, who, when his mother rebuked him for swearing, said, "*My father swears.*" What bitter regret, what unavailing sorrow must such a shocking exhibition of

parental influence have excited in the foolish woman who had married such a sinner! Would *you* avoid such an experience, young convert? Would *you* escape the misery of having an ungodly family? Then, marry not with an unconverted man or woman. Be fixed on this point. Live and die unmarried, or marry a fellow laborer in Christ.

The language of the New Testament is equally positive and unequivocal. "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,*" wrote Paul to the Corinthian church. Of a widow, also, after showing her right to a second marriage, he said, "*She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, ONLY IN THE LORD.*" She had no right as a Christian woman to marry out of Christ. No! as a believer, she could have no part with Belial. She must marry *only in the Lord*.


Is not this authoritative? Do not these texts absolutely *forbid* the intermarriage of believers with unbelievers as plainly as the Jewish law forbade the union of the Jew and heathen. To me, it seems, that language could not make the prohibition more

clear. And that disciple, who in its face proceeds to the formation of such a marriage, is guilty of WILFUL SIN.

Once more then, I implore you, dear young convert, to set your heart against the idea of marrying a Christless person. You may have an opportunity to secure wealth and social consideration by such a marriage. Spurn such an idea. Marriages for money's sake are only instances of legalized fornication. True affection must form the basis of a genuine marriage. Or you may be lured by the hope of converting your partner to Christ. The hope is only a fond delusion. You will rather be drawn from Christ; and besides, if during the term of previous courtship you do not succeed, depend upon it you will not after the bond is sealed. Such conversions rarely occur. Be not therefore deceived. Scripture, experience and common sense combine to show that the marriages of Christians with unbelievers, are fatal to the piety of the former and by no means beneficial to the latter.

CHAPTER XII.

DECISION OF CHARACTER.

T was anciently said of Fabricius, a noble Roman, that a man might as easily turn the sun from his course as to persuade him to do a base or a dishonest action. This saying proves the reputation of Fabricius for impregnable integrity, for unyielding decision. Our Milton's description of Abdiel is similar. He was —

“ ——— Faithful found

Among the faithless, faithful he

Among innumerable false, unmoved,

Unshaken, unseduced, untterrified ;

His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.

Nor number, nor example with him wrought,

To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,

Though single.”

And such is the character which every young convert should labor to form for himself. He should be a Joshua in the midst of the irresolute and faltering, crying, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" An Elijah defending the honor of prostrate truth, in the very congregation of Baal; and exhorting them, "*If the Lord be God to serve him.*" A Daniel holding on to his integrity in the face of Death, crying aloud in the hearing of the wicked, "*My God will send his angel and will shut the lions' mouths, that they shall not hurt me.*" A Paul professing godliness before philosophers on Mars Hill, or in the presence of Nero at the Court of Rome; and always declaring by word and act, "*I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*"

The leading element in a decided Christian is firmness. Nothing moves him away from the post of duty. His whole being is brought into subjection to religious principles. Having "*put his hand to the plough,*" nothing induces him to look back. He never falters or hesitates. His mind is made up to do

right. Be it ever so costly to please God, he cheerfully pays the price, because he has settled it irrevocably, that the approbation of God is worth all else combined.

Nor is this the decision of an impulsive hour ; it is the uniform practice of his life. Let the zeal of the church be flaming or dead, he moves on steadfastly, like the planet in its orbit. He "*holds fast*," whereunto he has attained. He steadily travels onward, like a river to its ocean home.

It is said of Sir Thomas Abney, once Mayor of London, that "he made no scruple at the lord Mayor's feast, to rise in the evening and inform the company that he was going to withdraw, to perform the worship of God in his family ; after which he would return again."* This is an example of Christian decision worthy of imitation. The man who could face so dignified an assembly, composed mainly of irreligious persons, and so boldly confess his attachment to the duty of prayer, must have possessed an extraordinary degree both of piety and firmness.

* Jay's Family Discourses.

His character must have been well established, or he would have met the scorn of the party. But he, or any other uniform Christian, could resolutely meet all God's claims and command the veneration of the spectators.

I will now spread before you, my reader, an illustrative sketch of a decided Christian, which will shew you what he is, and I trust, allure you to become one yourself. The picture is substantially true. Names and places are of course concealed.

Frank Edwards, a young married man, employed as a machinist in an English manufactory, was converted. His conversion was deep and genuine; it reached both heart and life. The change was complete, and from being notoriously trifling and thoughtless he became a proverb for cheerful gravity and serious deportment.

Very delightful was the first experience of that young man. A good workman, he enjoyed constant employment, with wages sufficient to procure the comforts of life. He had a thrifty wife, who was led to Jesus by his own influence. Their cottage was

the house of prayer. Religion, plenty, health, and contentment dwelt with them; probably there was not another home in England more pleasant than that of this young, pious mechanic.

But piety is not an effectual shield to defend from trouble. It supports — gloriously supports the sufferer — but his path to heaven is appointed to lead through “*much tribulation.*” As in nature, the storm-cloud gathers in the horizon, while the sun shines with splendor in the heavens, so in the kingdom of grace, while the child of God rejoices in ease and prosperity, and ascends the summit of Pisgah, he may rest assured that events are in preparation, which will hurl him down to the vale of Baca — to the place of weeping and lamentation.

It was thus with Frank Edwards and his happy family. In the midst of their prosperity, adversity looked in at their cottage door; poverty sat down at their table. Let us trace the cause of their trouble.

One day the machinery of the manufactory broke and its operations were stopped. All hands were set to repairing it with the utmost haste. The week

was closing and the work was unfinished. On Saturday evening, the overseer entered and said to the men, "You must work all day to-morrow."

Frank instantly remembered the fourth commandment. He resolved to keep it, because he felt that his duty to God required him under all circumstances to refrain from labor on the Sabbath day. Offering an inward prayer to God, he respectfully addressed the overseer :

"Sir, to-morrow is Sunday."

"I know it, but our mill must be repaired."

"Will you excuse me, sir, from working on the Sabbath ? "

"No, Frank, I can't excuse any one. The company will give you double wages, and you must work."

"I am sorry, sir, but I cannot work to-morrow."

"Why not, Mr. Edwards ; you know our necessities, and we offer you a fair remuneration."

"Sir, it will be a sin against God, and no necessity is strong enough — no price high enough, to induce me to offend my Maker any more."

“I am not here to argue the morality of the question, Frank ; you must either work to-morrow or be discharged.”

“I cannot hesitate, sir, a moment, I have resolved to please God. Cost what earthly price it may, I will keep his commandments.”

“Then, Mr. Edwards, if you will step into the counting room, I will pay you what the company owes you, and you will then leave our establishment.”

To say that Frank's heart did not shrink from this trial, would be to deny his humanity ; but his faith came to his help. Casting himself upon God, he gathered up his tools and entered the counting room.

The overseer was extremely unwilling to part with Frank ; for he was a superior workman, and since his conversion, had been the most trusty man in the employment of the company. He therefore addressed him very kindly, while handing him his wages : “Mr. Edwards, had you not better reconsider your resolution. Remember, work is scarce,

we pay you high wages, and it is not often we require you to labor on the Sabbath."

"Sir," replied Frank, "my mind is fixed. I will not work on Sundays if I have to starve to death."

"Very well, sir," was the cool answer of the overseer; who, not being a Christian, could not appreciate the noble heroism of Frank's reply.

On reaching his humble cottage, the mechanic could not forbear a sigh, as the thought flitted across his mind, that possibly he might soon lose his home comforts. But that sigh was momentary. He remembered the promise of God and grew calmly peaceful. Entering his house, he said to his wife, "Mary, I am discharged!"

"Discharged, Frank! What has happened? O what will become of us! Tell me why you are discharged!"

"Be calm, Mary! God will provide! I left the shop because I would not break the Sabbath. They wanted me to work to-morrow, and because I refused, they discharged me."

Mary was silent. She looked doubtful, as if not quite sure that her husband was right. Her faith was not so strong as Frank's, nor was her character so decided. In her heart she thought, as thousands of fearful disciples would under similar circumstances, that her husband had gone too far. But although she said nothing, Frank read her thoughts, and grieved over her want of faith.

Sweet was the hour of family prayer to Frank that evening, sweeter still was the secret devotion of the closet, and he never closed his eyes with more heavenly calmness of spirit, than when he sunk to sleep on that eventful evening.

The following week brought Frank's character to a severer test. All his friends condemned him ; even some members of his church said, they thought he had gone beyond the strict requirement of duty. "It was well," they said, "to keep the Sabbath ; but then, a man like Frank Edwards ought to look at the wants of his family and not strain after a gnat, and perhaps be compelled to go to the work-house.

This was dastardly language for Christians, but

there are always too many of this class of irresolute sight-walking disciples. Frank met them on all sides, and found himself almost without sympathy. A few noble, enlightened Christians, however, admired and encouraged him. Frank held to his purpose with a spirit worthy of a martyr.

The cloud grew darker. Through the influence of his former employers, who were vexed because he left them, the other corporations refused to employ him. Winter came on with its frosts and storms. His little stock of savings gradually disappeared. Poverty stared them in the face. Frank's watch, Mary's silver spoons, their best furniture went to the auction shop. They had to leave their pleasant cottage, and one little garret held the little afflicted family and the slender remains of their cottage furniture.

Did Frank regret his devotion to God? No! he rejoiced in it. He had obeyed God, he said, and God would take care of him. Light would break out of darkness. All would yet be well. So spoke his unyielding faith; his fixed heart doubted not. The

blacker the cloud, the more piercing grew the eye of his triumphing faith. With his Mary the case was different. Her faith was weak, and, pressing her babes to her bosom, she often wept, and bent before the sweeping storm.

The winter passed away, and Frank was still in the fiery furnace, rejoicing, however, amidst the flames. Some friends offered him the means of emigrating to the United States. Here was a light gleam. He rejoiced in it, and prepared to quit a place which refused him bread because he feared God.

Behold him ! that martyr-mechanic, on board the emigrant ship. Her white sails catch the favoring breeze, and, with a soul full of hope, Frank looked toward this western world. A short, pleasant passage, brought them to one of our Atlantic cities.

Here he soon found that his faith had not been misplaced. The first week of his arrival saw him not merely employed, but filling the station of foreman in the establishment of some extensive machinists.

Prosperity now smiled on Frank, and Mary once more rejoiced in the possession of home comforts. They lived in a style far better and more comfortable than when in their English cottage. "Mary," Frank would often ask, pointing to their charming little parlor, "is it not best to obey God?"

Mary could only reply to this question with smiles and tears; for every thing around them said, "*Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud. Surely he shall not be moved for ever.*"

But Frank's trials were not over. A similar claim for Sabbath labor was made upon him in his new situation. An engine for a railroad or steamboat was broken, and must be repaired. "You will keep your men employed through to-morrow, Mr. Edwards; so that the engine may be finished on Monday morning," said the chief overseer.

"I cannot do it, sir."

"Why not, Mr. Edwards?"

"I cannot break the Lord's day. I will work until midnight on Saturday, and begin directly after

midnight on Monday morning. God's holy time I will not touch."

"That won't do, Mr. Edwards. You must work your men through the Sabbath, or the owners will dismiss you."

"Be it so, sir!" replied Frank. "I crossed the Atlantic because I would not work on Sunday. I will not do it here."

Monday came, the work was unfinished. Frank expected his discharge. While at work, a gentleman inquired for him. "I want you to go with me to ——, to take charge of my establishment. Will you go?"

"I don't know," replied Frank. "If, as I expect, my present employers dismiss me, I will go. If they do not, I have no wish to leave."

"That is settled. They intend to dismiss you, and I know the reason. I honor you for it, and wish you to enter my establishment."

Here again our mechanic saw the hand of God. His decision had again brought him into trial, and God had come to his aid. The new situation for

which he had just engaged was worth much more than the one he was to leave. God had kept his promise.

Frank removed to his new home with a character for decision which henceforth placed him above temptation of that nature. "It will be of no use to ask him," was the reply of his employer, when desired to have Frank and his men do some repairs to a broken engine upon the Sabbath. No! Frank's heart was fixed. He would "*not be moved away*," by any inducements, from "*the hope of the gospel*."

Christian reader! what is your opinion of Frank Edwards? Is not his decision admirable? Do you not wish to be like him? True, his decision was tested by temptations of only one class, but the Spirit which repelled those was obviously ready to resist any others. It was not the Sabbath, merely, whose claims he regarded; it was the God of the Sabbath. Frank's mind was settled not to displease God in any thing. So fixed was this purpose, that he preferred starvation before its violation. He was brought to that test. His faithfulness was stronger

than his natural appetites, his passions, his affections. He could not only suffer himself, but he could see the wife of his bosom and his children afflicted with poverty and threatened with hunger, through his obedience to God. By displeasing God, he could feed them and bring plenty to his home. But no ! dear as are the lives of his wife and children, God's smile is dearer. He will please God, though they and he die together.

And this is decision of character. This is what I want the young disciple to attain. I want him to be like the rock on an ocean island. The clouds gather above its head, the winds thunder around its heights, the wild waves, in their proudest strength, rise like liquid mountains, and breaking at its base, roll up and bury it in water and foam. Trembling, it endures the mighty shock, hidden and seemingly lost until, confounded, the vanquished waters fall back, and the rock reveals its whitened brow, and looks down upon its foe with the calm dignity of conscious security.

How beautiful are such Christians ! With what

moral majesty they walk the earth ! What delicious fragrance their actions breathe forth upon the world. Money will not purchase their integrity : passion will not entice them into the secret paths of wickedness ; sloth cannot subdue them or bind them in chains of adamant. They are Christ's freemen — the true nobility of the Christian church — the faithful imitators of their adorable Master — the living demonstrations of gospel truth.


This character may be yours, young convert ! Whatever the fickleness of the past ; however you may have been tossed about hitherto ; by the grace of God you may become stable and firm henceforth, for the angel of the covenant has said, and he cannot go back from his word, " MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE." Whoever thou art, however feeble of heart, his grace is *sufficient for thee* !

Decide, then, in your heart, that in all the future acts of your life, the will of God shall be your rule of action. Resolve to give that will its most rigid construction, and to walk by it, in the most rigid manner. Look not so much at the present, immediate

results of your obedience, as to its ultimate issue. Confer not with flesh and blood. Walk by faith. Decide in view of the revelations of faith. Be especially careful of receding from your purpose in a small matter. Small matters are the fatal stumbling-blocks of the soul. As a broken buckle once proved the ruin of a stout warrior, by permitting his saddle to slip, so have things equally trivial often destroyed souls. Be firm, then, in *little* things — in *all* things. Bring every feeling, every thought, every employment, every act to this test — *Will it please God?* Adhere firmly to this grand test. Strictly maintain it at any cost! You will thus speedily gain a decided character. Men will repose confidence in you, they will submit to your influence — they will glorify God for your fidelity, and you will have your reward in the abundance of your heart consolations and in the brilliancy of your future crown of glory.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOLINESS.

LESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD! Yes, it must be so! The *pure in heart* must be blessed indeed. They are free from all sinful feeling and desire. "*Sin hath no more dominion*" over them. They are cleansed "*from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.*" They have laid aside "*every weight and the sin which did so easily beset them.*" They "*love God with all the heart.*" They are "*crucified with Christ.*" Christ lives in them, and they "*live by faith in the Son of God.*" O! they are blessed beyond conception, whose hearts are purified by that precious blood,

which "*cleanseth from all sin.*" They constantly sing with the pious Newton, who sung :

"By faith in Christ I walk with God,
With Heaven, my journey's end, in view ;
Supported by his staff and rod,
My road is safe and pleasant too.

' Though snares and dangers throng my path,
And earth and hell my course withstand,
I triumph over all by faith,
Guarded by his Almighty hand."

In the border towns of New Hampshire, in the vicinity of the yet unsubdued forest, I have often seen the camp of the half civilized Indian family. The red man I have seen there was no longer the wild savage whose home was the silent glen, whose food was the stricken deer or the forest-grown maize, and whose most loved employment was war. No ! the Indian of to-day is a man of peace ; he labors in the production of the variously shaped work-basket ; he eats the food of civilized man, and, in part, adopts the garments of his white neighbors. Yet he still clings to the woods and to the wigwam. Reject-

ing a part of the habits of his ancestors, he has ceased to be a savage ; refusing to enter the convenient house and to adopt the comforts and improvements of the white man, he is not wholly civilized. He occupies a middle ground between the barbarism of his Indian ancestors and the civilization of his Saxon conquerors.

And is it not a fact that thousands in the Christian church, like the modern Indian, occupy a middle ground between their former sinful state and that state of inward purity which is their privilege as children of God ? They have cast off outward sin ; they have even gained a partial victory over their inbred corruption, but they are not “ *pure in heart.* ” “ Filthiness of flesh and spirit ” still cleaves to them ; carnal feelings and tempers still struggle mightily in their souls for the victory ; their religious characters are essentially defective, in many very important features. Their experience is beautifully, yet painfully described in the following verses of the sacred poet.

“Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathomed, no man knows ;
I see from far thy beauteous light,
Inly I sigh for thy repose ;
My heart is pained, nor can it be
At rest till it finds rest in thee.

Thy secret voice invites me still,
The sweetness of thy yoke to prove ;
And fain I would ; but though my will
Seems fixt, yet wide my passions rove ;
Yet hind’rances strew all the way ;
I aim at thee, yet from thee stay.”

The Christian who lives in this state is not what he should be. The gospel was not given to awaken desires it cannot satisfy. The blessed Jesus said, “I WILL GIVE YOU REST.” But the fluctuating, changeful, mournful experience of most professing believers is any thing but *rest*—it is often labor, pain and sorrow.

Why is this ? Must it be so ? Is it unavoidable ? These queries the young convert cannot avoid putting to his own heart, and in reference to his own experience. It is well to do so. But it is important to solve them correctly.

The truth is, that there is not the least necessity for a sad and lamentable experience in any child of God. Divine commands, divine promises, scripture examples and numerous living witnesses incontestably prove it to be God's will that the disciple should be holy in heart and in life.

The enjoyment of *holiness* is sweet indeed. None but the "pure in heart" know what the word "REST" implies. Here is a statement from one who had spent several years in suffering the unrest of an unsanctified believer, and, who having subsequently attained and enjoyed the blessing of holiness for four years, gave this testimony. "The prevailing state of my mind has been in no wise that of high emotions. On the contrary, there has been *great calmness, placidity and quiet of mind*; a freedom from excitement, or agitation of feeling. I have often thought that *p  ace* was the peculiar, the special state of mind belonging to Christ's disciples, as he said, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.'"

How desirable a state is this! "Great calmness,

placidity and quiet of mind," during a period of four years! What soul on earth, beside the sanctified one, can produce such an experience? What can the most aspiring heart desire more?

Why do not all Christians gain this blessed state — this sublime serenity of mind? And why especially do not the sincere and humble, who really desire it, enter into this sweet state?

The reason why multitudes of church members are not holy is because they do not seek to be so. They are worldly, vain or idle. They are loungers and slumberers in the vineyard of Jesus Christ. It will be a miracle if, when the bridegroom appears, *they* are not numbered with the sleeping virgins.

But it is not so with all. Many desire a higher and better experience. They read, pray, resolve, weep, struggle, and after all, make little progress in the way of holiness. Why is this?

One chief reason is, that such seekers too often labor to mend their religious characters instead of aiming at the purification of their hearts; or, to express myself differently, they aim at the purification of

their hearts by improving their characters, by striving to subdue particular sins. Let me give you an example, to illustrate my meaning.

I was once very intimate with a young man whom I will name Joseph. Shortly after his conversion, he was introduced to a poor sister, whose employment was washing and ironing. But though she was poor in circumstances, she was rich in faith ; she was a living example of the power of Jesus Christ to cleanse the heart from all sin ; and she soon drew the attention of my friend Joseph to the subject of Christian holiness. He was sincere and earnest, and therefore received her counsels with profit. After one or two interviews, he seriously engaged in an effort to obtain complete sanctification.

His attention was first directed to a discovery of the principal defects in his character. He saw himself strongly inclined to pride, to impetuosity of temper, to envy and to covetousness. Over these sinful inclinations he mourned and prayed. He resolved to overcome them.

“I will not yield to pride,” he said to himself.

That same evening he was requested to pray in a social meeting. He had great liberty of expression. "How eloquently I prayed to night. The brethren will think me to be very pious and talented," was his inward thought as he closed his prayer. He yielded to the suggestion and indulged in very self-complacent feelings. "Is not this pride?" his conscience at length whispered. Poor Joseph, his spirits sunk, and he went home dejected.

Confessing his sin, he renewed his resolutions. The next day some one said to him, —

"Joseph, do you know how you offended Mr. C—— last night?"

"No! How?"

"Why, in your prayer?"

"How did my prayer offend him?"

"He says you displayed a vain, pompous spirit, and that it will not be safe to put you forward too fast."

Joseph colored and replied, "I think the old man had better mind his own business. He don't like young men, and I don't mean to care any thing about

him." These last words were spoken with an evidently excited temper. Poor Joseph! Then he again recollected himself, he felt subdued and conquered. "Alas! alas! I never shall be holy," was his inward exclamation.

These struggles with inward evils and characteristic sins, were continued and renewed. Indeed they formed the history of his experience for several months. He made but small progress in his endeavors to check the growth of sinful feeling, and, at last, sunk down to a level with the ordinary professor, making scarcely an effort after a pure heart.

Why did Joseph fail of success? He was sincere, earnest and willing to be purified. Yet it is not wonderful that he failed. It would have been wonderful if he had succeeded. His efforts were misdirected. The following incidents will serve to explain his mistake.

Near to a village in Europe there was once a large morass. Its stagnant waters created a fatal malaria. The atmosphere, burdened with the exhalations of the morass, poisoned the people. It became

a serious question whether they should forsake their homes or drain the morass. After due deliberation they resolved to do the latter.

Drains were cut to conduct the waters away, but the labors of the day were neutralized during the night. What was drawn off by the drain, was replenished from some secret source ; and, after prodigious labors, the morass was still undrained — the malaria remained.

At last they conceived the very obvious idea that some spring supplied the morass. If that could be discovered and its waters drawn off by a fitting channel, then the morass would become dry. Happy thought ! The spring was found, the channel formed and the unhealthy morass was converted into fertile fields and lovely gardens.

Now does the reader understand the cause of Joseph's failure ? He was like these villagers. They aimed at destroying an effect while the cause remained. So did Joseph. He tried to remove pride, temper and the like, from his character, while the carnal heart, from which these evils sprung, re-

mained. He did not succeed. Of course he *could* not. He could not help doing and feeling as he did, while his heart was unsanctified. Like the spring, it kept sending out its corrupt streams, and he could not prevent their overflow upon his life. Had he taken his *heart* to the fountain opened in Jerusalem and submitted it to the sanctifying influence of the blood of Christ, his defects of character would have disappeared with the corruption of his heart.

Here, then, is an important truth to be written on the young convert's mind. All defects of character originate in the heart. All your pride, your vanity, your evil tempers, your covetousness, and your various other failings, proceed from the undestroyed carnality of the heart, as the Savior said — “ *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*”

The influence of the heart on the character is strikingly shown in the following fact. “Some winters ago two friends were travelling in Lapland. To protect themselves against the extreme rigor of the season, they had enveloped themselves in thick

foldings of garments, and were well wrapped in fur. Notwithstanding all these precautions the cold was almost insufferable. In the course of their journey through one of the glens of that country, they perceived the body of a man nearly covered with snow. When they reached him, he appeared frost-bitten and dead. What was to be done. They were both enfeebled by the frost, breathing an atmosphere of snow and shivering with the cold. One of the travellers proposed, that as they could do the frost-bitten man no good, they should leave him and make the best of their way to the distant inn. The other felt the spark of compassionate benevolence kindling in his breast, and began the work of restoring animation, while his companion shivered and shuddered on to the distant village. His efforts were at first very feeble, but as he persevered he became warm. His benevolent labor was crowned with success, animation was restored, and a man was saved from death.

Here may be seen two men with *hearts* of an opposite kind. One selfish, the other benevolent. The

selfish heart was willing the poor traveller should die in the snow ; the benevolent heart was not willing he should so perish. Hence the difference in their conduct. The one passed on, the other stopped and saved a life.

Holiness, therefore, is to be sought for in the heart. That must be made right, and the life, the character will, of necessity, be right also.

But how is that purity of heart to be gained? Does not the young convert wish to know? O! is he not in a flame of desire to be the possessor of a holy heart? If so, I will endeavor to point out the royal road — the way cast up for the redeemed.

The first thing necessary to entire sanctification is, a *willingness to be sanctified*. This implies a fixed decision to be entirely the Lord's — to consecrate the whole soul, with the body, to the service of Almighty God. The seeker after a full salvation, must bring *himself*, without the least reserve, and dedicate the offering for ever to the work and service of Jehovah.

This consecration made, nothing more is required but simple faith in Jesus Christ. This faith compre-

hends an undoubting belief in the entire willingness of God to sanctify, according to his promise, and also an unshrinking confidence that he does accept and purify in the instant that the act of self-consecration is performed. Not, indeed, because of that act, but because he has promised to do so for the sake of Jesus Christ. The act of self-consecration being nothing more than placing ourselves on the spot where God has promised to meet us. It has no merit; it does not procure the sanctifying Spirit. No; it is only the proper posture of a spirit waiting to receive a free gift, at the hands of a divine sovereign. The *blood of Jesus*, and that alone, is the meritorious cause—the all victorious motive which moves our heavenly Father to put his sanctifying Spirit into the believer's heart. Upon that blood, therefore, must the convert depend, when asking for a holy heart.

Behold that altar reared in the court of the Jewish tabernacle! Behold, too, that trembling worshipper. He has sinned; his soul is guilty; but he has brought a sin-offering to the priest. As the devoted

victim is laid upon the altar, the soul of the worshipper shivers with the fear of conscious guilt. "Will God indeed accept *my* offering? Will he smile upon a sacrifice from so polluted a creature as I am?" are the questionings of his fearful heart. But suddenly his countenance brightens. It is written, and he just now remembers the sweet truth, that "the altar sanctifies the gift." Doubt, therefore, is out of the question. His gift is on the altar, and according to the word of God it is sanctified—it is accepted. God is pleased, and he is forgiven.

And thus is it, dear young believer, in the covenant of grace. Its language is, *I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*; it offers you an altar, whereupon to present your offering, even the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That altar has a sanctifying power. Whatever is really laid thereon to be cleansed, is, by virtue of Christ, instantly sanctified. It cannot be otherwise. The altar sanctifieth the gift, or, in other words, *the blood of Christ*, (the spiritual altar,) *cleanseth* (the offering laid upon it)

from all sin. You have, therefore, only to cast your consecrated soul upon the blessed Jesus, forbearing to doubt in your heart, and assuredly you shall, in that instant, be the possessor of a soul purged from all iniquity. Your heart shall be made clean henceforth, your life and character shall be blameless before God.

Come then, my young reader, and devote yourself in this glorious and evangelical manner to the service of God! Grasp your high calling's privilege. Be assured that *you* are not excluded from its enjoyments. The precious promises are not given to particular, favored persons; they are given by God, who is no respecter of persons, to the church — to all true believers. They are yours — freely bestowed to be freely enjoyed. O embrace them! Be like Abraham, persuaded of their truth. Resolutely cast yourself upon them. How strong are the inducements to do so! What superior enjoyment is afforded by a life of holiness, over a life of cold lukewarmness! What power it bestows to do good! Sanctified to God, like the humble Carvosso or the

modest Harlan Page, you may bring many to Christ — unsanctified, you will be to the church like a diseased limb on a human body, and your religious profession will be little less than a curse to the world. Sanctified to God, your endurance to the end is far more probable than if you settle down into a state of religious ease. Then, how much more honor you will bring to your Savior ! Let him stamp you with his pure image and men will glorify him for the power of his grace, as manifested through you. Nor is it in this life alone you will reap the fruits of holiness ; in the life to come a brighter crown, a higher dignity, superior enjoyment, greater nearness to Christ, will be your eternal reward. O then, be holy ! Thirst after a pure heart. Be filled with God ! The wants of the world, the state of the church, the voice of the Holy Trinity all cry aloud to your young heart — “ Be holy ! be holy ! ” May you respond to this Almighty voice, and cry —

“ Take my poor heart, and let it be
For ever closed to all but thee ;
Seal thou my breast, and let me wear
Thy pledge of love for ever there.”

CHAPTER XIV.

APOSTASY.



ERE two beggars equally squalid and miserable to solicit alms at our door, we should at first sight feel an equal amount of sympathy for each of them. But if upon inquiry, we should learn that one of them had been a beggar from his birth, and had become so accustomed to his dependent life as to find a melancholy pleasure in it ; while the other was a fugitive prince, born in a palace, nurtured in luxury and educated in a royal university, but driven to a foreign land by sad reverses of fortune and compelled by stern necessity to beg, our sympathies would then chiefly flow toward him. We might pity both, but the fallen prince

would share the largest place in our feelings and charities. We should intuitively perceive how the contrast between his present degradation and his former dignity would give occasion to bitter remembrances, to a deep sense of shame, which, added to the actual privations of his lot, would make him a far greater sufferer than his companion. That he had known better and happier days, would be the most bitter drop in his cup of sorrow.

For a similar reason, an apostate is more wretched than any other sinner. He has been an acknowledged son of the Most High; he has been the possessor of an inner life, of a glowing hope, of spiritual joys, which, alas! he has thrown away for some worldly bauble. He has violated the most solemn covenants; turned his back ungratefully upon the most affectionate of Saviors, and his sense of guilt and degradation is so deep, he is both ashamed and afraid to attempt a return to God. His reflections are of the most painful character, his mind knows no rest. Abandoned by God, deprived by his own apostasy of the confidence of his former compan-

ions, he is wretched to the last degree. Montgomery has drawn a graphic picture of a backslider's heart in the following beautiful lines. They are supposed to be uttered by Javan, the apostate hero of his poem.

“ There is no home, no peace, no hope for me,
 I hate the worldling's vanity and noise,
 I have no fellow feeling in his joys ;
 The saint's serener bliss I cannot share,
 My soul, alas ! hath no communion there.
 This is the portion of my cup below,
 Silent, unmingled, solitary woe ;
 To bear from clime to clime the curse of Cain,
 Sin with remorse, yet find repentance vain ;
 And cling, in blank despair, from breath to breath,
 'To nought in life, except the fear of death.’* ”

Such, dear young convert, is the backslider after the first excitements of his apostasy are over. Lured from Christ by the false promises of worldly delight, he finds that the things which give pleasure to common sinners are ashes in his mouth. The world is changed to him ; it will not yield him the gratification it gave before his conversion. He can-

* World before the Flood. Canto 3.

not forget the exalted happiness of his forfeited relation to God. He is filled with despair in regard to any future recovery of heavenly favor. His lot is one of unmitigated misery. He understands the meaning of the Holy Ghost, who has said: "*Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.*"

And while the apostate brings all this misery upon himself, his example is most disastrous in its influence over others. It inflicts a sore wound upon the church; weakens her power to do good; and, in the strong language of Jay, "is a judgment on the people where it happens." The sight of an apostate hardens the hearts of the wicked, confirms them in the vain hope that all religion is a "cunningly devised fable," and consequently increases the probabilities of their destruction.

There is one aspect of a backslider's influence

peculiarly dreadful. I will present it in the form of an illustration.

Let us suppose the people of a particular city to be visited with an ophthalmic disease. As it spreads, multitudes grow blind, and nearly all the people are more or less afflicted in their eyes. The physicians try their skill in vain; every known remedy for such diseases fails to arrest its progress; it is feared the whole community will become incurably blind.

In the midst of all this suffering, let us imagine that a stranger comes from a distant city, professing a sufficiency of skill to eradicate the distemper. He opens an infirmary, inviting the populace to submit to his directions. But having already suffered much by ineffectual experiments, the people are slow to believe his pretensions. At last, a few persons venture to apply, and shortly after go forth professing to be cured.

Now it is apparent, if these persons gave the necessary evidence of their professed cure, so that their restored eye-sight was obvious to all, their professions would give an immediate popularity to the

infirmary. Men would have faith in the stranger physician, and would hasten to be benefited by his skill.

But what if after a short time, the persons first cured lapsed into blindness again ! What if the disease wrought upon them more powerfully than at first ! Would not their relapse destroy men's growing faith in the physician ? Would they not assert, pointing to these cases, that his cures were only apparent and partial ? And would not the relapse of these first patients neutralize the *profession* of those who might daily come forth declaring themselves cured. Their declaration would not sustain the popularity of the infirmary ; unbelief and doubt in the reality of these cures would take the place of faith and confidence, and the physician would be denounced as an empiric and a pretender.

Two points in this illustration are important to our purpose. The first is, that the permanent success of the infirmary depended on the well sustained professions of cure on the part of its patients. The second, that the relapse of those whose declarations

had created the faith of the community would neutralize the professions of later patients. People would say to each other: "Wait! we shall soon see these persons as blind as ever. They are not permanently cured."

The reader cannot fail to perceive the general application of this illustration. The gospel with its adored, divine Physician is represented by the infirmary and its owner. The gospel comes to mankind, offering a balm whose virtues it proclaims to be sufficient for the renovation of a ruined world. The church of our Lord Jesus profess to find it sufficient for their complete purity and blissful enjoyment. They say it is true, as taught in the gospel, that Christ, embraced by faith, fills the soul with lofty bliss, completely satisfies the heart and gives the believer a power to live without sin.

There are startling professions. They are never made without some result. Such declarations from the church and ministry are the God-appointed instrumentalities for spreading the gospel. "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye*

also may have fellowship with us," is the language of the saintly John. He here describes his preaching and writing as a declaration of experience ; and the Saints are said to overcome by the " word of their testimony." Indeed, the reader will not probably call this truth in question, that it is God's plan to spread the gospel through the testimony of its believers.

If, therefore, all who professed faith in the gospel, gave a visible demonstration of its power in their lives, the world would be confounded : it would be taken captive by the moral power of the church.

But why is it not so ? The church has its living demonstrations of the truth, who constantly testify of its power to save. Why is that testimony comparatively inoperative ?

Ask the apostate ? Inquire of the backslidden multitudes who crowd the broad road to destruction ? These are they, who have robbed the profession of the church of its practical value. They once declared the power of the gospel to save, but they have fearfully forsaken that gospel and denied the

truth of their former declarations. The world heard their testimony for the gospel, it has also witnessed their apostasy, and unhappily, it allows that apostasy to neutralize the declarations of faithful Christians.

The apostate is, therefore, a robber. He robs the church of one of its most precious possessions — its influence. O, this is a dreadful crime ! A sin most fearful in its results upon mankind, for it is one of the chief hinderances to the spread of the gospel ; it sends thousands to perdition, who, were not the moral power of the church weakend by the apostate, would be saved by the “ *word of her testimony.*”

View the apostate in any light, and he appears hideous and abominable. He is wretched in himself, injurious to all around him, offensive to God in the highest degree, and an object of painful astonishment to the universe. When God looks upon him and his companions, he cries : “ *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid ! be ye very desolate, saith the Lord, for my people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken me, the fountain of*

living waters, and hewn out to themselves cisterns — broken cisterns that can hold no water !”

Dear young Christian ! Will you ever be an apostate ? Can it be possible that after your covenants and professions—your enjoyments and hopes—you will turn traitor to Jesus Christ, and abandon your profession and your church ? God forbid ! Yet, you must not forget that the thing is possible.

Yes it is possible. From being an angel, Satan fell into hell. Adam, possessed of unsullied purity, fell into apostasy and was expelled from paradise. Demas, from being a companion of apostles, fell and forsook his Savior and his church. And even Paul, with all his zeal, his devotedness and peculiar evidences of heavenly favor, saw and feared the possibility of losing his soul ; for said he, “ *I keep under my body and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away.*” He also grieved over some in the primitive churches, who in his apostolic judgment, had been soundly converted, but had unhappily fallen into apostasy : hence he besought Timo-

thy to hold "*faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith had made shipwreck.*" Your apostasy is therefore strictly possible.

But, blessed be God, though possible it is not necessary. Watchfulness, devotion, faith, will, with the grace of God, keep you secure from harm. No man or devil is "able to pluck you out of the hand's of your beloved Savior. He has said, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" Trusting to his promises, thousands have maintained their steadfastness and held fast unto the end. Every saint in glory is a pledge to you of the possibility of your endurance unto the end, for each of them overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, under circumstances and in conditions very similar to your own. Courage, then, young convert! Believe in the possibility of your endurance; yea believe, that aided by the divine comforter, you will come off at last "*more than conqueror.*"

Still the danger you are in, will prompt the question, How shall I escape the wretchedness of apos-

tasy? To solve this inquiry, you must observe the causes of apostasy and avoid them.

It is impossible to state all the precise *facts* which lead all apostates and backsliders away from Christ. This much is certain. No one plunges by one step from the heights of Christian enjoyment into the depths of a backslider's misery. The apostasy begins in the heart; its victim is always a backslider in heart, before he renounces his profession. The closet is the scene usually where the first act of the tragedy is performed. Languid devotions there, prepare the Christian for a state of unwatchfulness in the world. Failing to watch with his usual diligence, the Tempter insinuates his suggestions into his mind. Pride, envy, temper or covetousness is excited a little. The closet, a second time, bears witness to a weakening faith; the Bible shares in the languor of the closet, and thus, little by little, step by step, the heart grows cold. Then comes some sinful self-indulgence. Duty is neglected. Vain regrets stir the soul, but the spell is successfully at work; the soul declines more and more, until weak-

ened, shorn, forsaken, it stumbles into an open sin, and then bids a sad adieu to all religion, to the church, to Jesus Christ.

To escape the apostate's fate, therefore, you must avoid the cause — the remote cause — the first beginnings of departure from the faith. Suspect the least degree of heart-coldness and drive it from you as your bitterest foe. Make it a point, that you will never rest a single moment without a conscious sense of the divine favor. Be immovable here. Whatever circumstances may be about you, decide to keep your eye of faith open on the Savior. If a cloud should intervene, pray through it. Never live in spiritual gloom. Wrestle, struggle, fight for *present* assurance. Therein lies your only safety. Do this, and you will never be an apostate.

Still, it must be remembered that this sublime faith, this constantly burning flame of devotion, can be maintained only in connection with outward obedience. Prayer in the closet, faith and love in the heart, can only be kept vigorous by faithfulness in the more practical departments of Christian duty.

For example, the gospel commands a disciple to let his "*light shine before men,*" — to exert a saving influence in the world. Hence, when a believer refrains from all direct efforts to save sinners — and his life is spent as if it were not his *business* to do good — how can he enjoy the devotions of the closet? He cannot have a conscience void of offence toward God, and consequently cannot enjoy intimate communion with him. To avoid apostasy, you must be a fellow-laborer with Christ. To be an idler in his vineyard, with an intelligent, scriptural hope of enduring to the end, is an impossibility. Inaction will invariably destroy confidence in God. And so will any other neglect of practical duty. There is a divinely established relation between the experimental and practical duties of Christianity — a relation so intimate and necessary, that without an inward experience of faith, love, and devotion, there can be no acceptable performance of those outward duties, comprehended in the expressive idea of doing good. Neither can that inward experience live, unless sustained by outward efforts in the cause. Hence it is,

that there are so many backsliders in the church, and so many apostates in the world. Their Christianity was not active, and so of necessity, it died away. Religious feeling, like a lamp, which not only requires oil to feed it, but a proper atmosphere in which to burn, must have both grace to support it and a healthy sphere of action in which to expend its energy. As a lamp lowered into the impure air of a deep cave, expires, so religious feeling dies away when shut up entirely within the narrow limits of self. It is in its nature expansive ; it will struggle to spread itself abroad, to assimilate whatever of human nature is within its reach, to its own likeness. Let this tendency of its nature be resisted ; it will grow sickly, pine away and die.

In view of these remote causes of backsliding, you must, my young friend, see the importance of keeping every approach to your heart well guarded. Watchfulness at every point but one, is insufficient. The slumber of one sentinel may prove the destruction of the army ; the omission to guard one path to the fortress, may be the overthrow of the city. The

Romans once nearly lost their capitol and their nationality, by such a trivial neglect. They were closely besieged by those terrible men, the Gauls. They shut themselves up in their capitol, and placed guards every night to prevent a surprise. But there was one point they did not guard. The capitol stood upon a rock. On one side this rock was deemed inaccessible — they did not, therefore, place a guard there. The wily Gauls discovered a path by which it might be scaled, and in the dark night, with silent stealth, they climbed those crags. On they sped, unseen. Deep were the slumbers of the Romans — vain the watchfulness of the sentinel. On, on the Gaul urged his way. He reaches the summit. Very soon the unguarded Romans will perish! But no! God has a work for that iron-hearted people to perform, and choosing some birds — the sacred geese kept in their temple — as his instruments, they made unusual cackling. The Roman wonders — searches on all sides, and discerns the foe in season to rouse his companions in arms, and hurl the adventurous Gauls down the steeps they had so courageously

climbed. Rome was saved, but it was a very narrow escape from extermination. One unguarded spot placed them in this most imminent peril.

So, beloved youth, one duty, neglected, one sinful tendency unwatched, or even one act of self-denial declined, may terminate in apostasy and death.

Before taking my leave of the reader, I will guard him from one more evil, which has driven many from the path of life into the shocking gulf of apostasy and death. I will do it through an illustration.

ROBERT was once a living Christian, to-day he is a wretched wanderer from Christ. He became so, like all others, by degrees ; but there was a deciding fact in his history, which gave fixity and determination to his present character.

Robert had gradually declined in devotional feeling, when one day he committed a wilful and a deliberate sin. The manner of it was thus. He owed a debt, which it was not quite convenient for him to pay at that time. His creditor offered him his bill, asking, " Can you pay it to-day, Mr. —— ? "

" No, Sir, I cannot do it to-day ! "

“I wish you could. I very much want the money.”

“I have not money enough on hand to pay it to-day. I will certainly pay it soon !”

Reader ! Robert had money enough in his pocket to pay that bill ; but he wished to use it for another purpose. To rid himself of an importunate creditor, he told a lie !

Poor Robert ! It is impossible to describe his mental agony, when he reflected upon what he had done. It was his first wilful sin since his acceptance in Christ. Shame, horror, wretchedness, filled his soul. What ought he to have done ?

He ought to have instantly confessed his sin to God. His sin was great, but the promise of mercy was sufficient to cover it. “ *I write unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*” This precious promise, heinous as was his offence, was ample to procure his pardon and restoration to peace, if he had only gone with it in prayer to Almighty God !

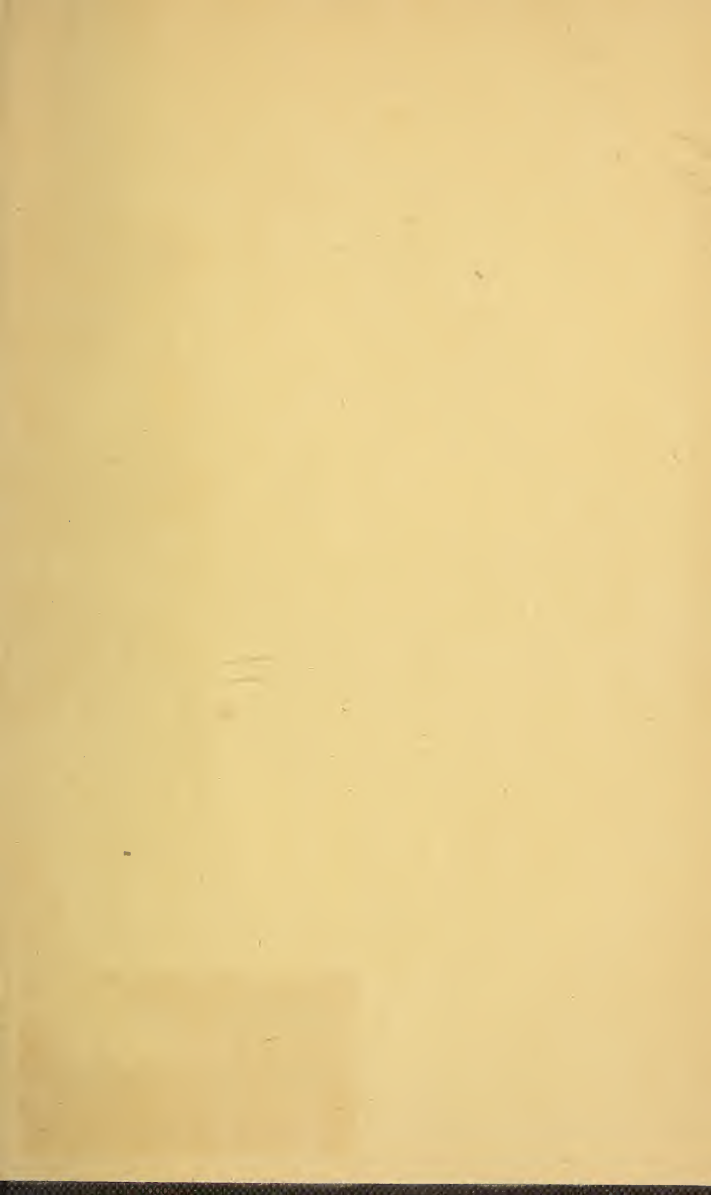
But what did Robert do? Alas! he did as too many have done under similar circumstances. He refrained from prayer entirely, on a plea of shame, and with a secret resolution to return to God *after some time had elapsed*. Fatal purpose! While he delayed, sin made powerful inroads upon his heart. Offence followed offence, until guilty, despairing and unhappy, he forsook the church and openly turned down into the broad road to destruction.

Let the reader beware of Robert's error. Let him first guard himself from falling into wilful sin. But, if that unhappy fall should overtake him, he must resolutely stop. By all means, he must go directly to God, even while his conscience is reeking with the pollution of his sin. Oh! he *must* go; ashamed, confounded, guilty, he must go and lie at Mercy's feet, pleading the promise of eternal love; nor must he rise from that prostration of spirit, until the mediation of Jesus triumphs, and he is restored again. But it is a fearful risk to run, and the young convert must set his face like a flint, and fix a resolution of

adamant, that he will never, on any account, plunge wilfully into sin.

Christian reader, we must now separate. I have led you to the more dangerous and difficult spots in your way to heaven. I have shown you both pleasant and unpleasant things in Christian experience. I trust my counsels may not prove useless; that you will be helped and benefited; and that when we have both overcome and travelled the length of the path of life on earth, we may rejoice and wear a crown of life together, in the world of glory.





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